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# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

## **Monterey, California**



## **THESIS**

**GREEK MILITARY STRATEGY: THE DOCTRINE OF  
DETERRENCE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON GREEK-  
TURKISH RELATIONS**

by  
Stergios Tsilikas

June 2001

Thesis Advisor:  
Associate Advisor:

Donald Abenheim  
Roger D. Ewerd

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**GREEK MILITARY STRATEGY: THE DOCTRINE OF DETERRENCE AND  
ITS IMPLICATIONS ON GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS**

Stergios Tsilikas  
Major, Hellenic Air Force  
Hellenic Air Force Academy, 1986

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE PLANNING AND  
MANAGEMENT**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**  
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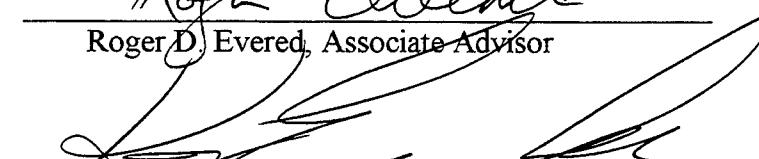
Author:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Stergios Tsilikas

Approved by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Donald Abenheim, Thesis Advisor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Roger D. Evered, Associate Advisor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kenneth J. Eukse, Dean  
Graduate School of Business and Public Policy

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## ABSTRACT

The invasion of Cyprus by Turkey in 1974 and the occupation of 37 percent of its territory proved to be a benchmark year for Greek-Turkish relations. Since then, new frictional issues have generated in the region, making the prospects for reconciliation harder and an all out confrontation more likely. Greek policy-makers and officials believe that Turkey has adopted an expansionist and revisionist policy over the last 25 years with the aim to alter the status quo in the region. To counter this threat, Greece is trying to build up elements in its military doctrine and defense posture that will fulfill its security concerns.

The recent dynamics of Greek-Turkish interaction are driven by the central factor of the growing Turkish military advantage, which makes an escalation towards warfare, even if unintended, more likely. External factors, namely the U.S., NATO, and EU, that can contribute toward a de-escalatory direction, are not effective enough to guarantee the prevention of an all out confrontation in the foreseeable future.

This thesis maintains that Greece's deterrence doctrine presents a unilateral effort that, under certain conditions, may provide an additional source of stability in addition to third party mediations. It concludes that the risk of warfare will remain significant between the two countries, unless Greece succeeds to restore the strategic balance with Turkey.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	1
A.	<b>GENERAL .....</b>	1
B.	<b>INTENTION OF THE THESIS .....</b>	5
1.	Purpose .....	5
2.	Significance .....	5
3.	Methodology-Hypothesis.....	7
II.	<b>GREEK DEFENSE POLICY .....</b>	9
A.	<b>DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS.....</b>	9
B.	<b>GREEK DEFENSE POSTURE - A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW ....</b>	12
C.	<b>THREAT ANALYSIS.....</b>	15
1.	Official Statements .....	16
2.	Diplomatic Initiatives .....	18
3.	Military Preparations and Actions .....	19
D.	<b>GREEK STRATEGY ELEMENTS.....</b>	21
1.	Defensive Sufficiency .....	21
2.	Flexible Response .....	25
3.	Cyprus and the Joint Defense Area Concept.....	27
III.	<b>GREECE AND TURKEY AT THE BRINK OF WAR .....</b>	37
A.	<b>CASES STUDY .....</b>	37
1.	The 1996 Imia/Kardak Crisis.....	37
2.	The S-300 Missile Crisis .....	42
B.	<b>THE DYNAMICS OF GREEK-TURKISH INTERACTION .....</b>	44
IV.	<b>TURKEY'S POLICY AND THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL FACTORS IN THE GREEK-TURKISH INTERACTION .....</b>	51
A.	<b>TURKEY'S POST COLD WAR ROLE AND SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS .....</b>	51

<b>B.</b>	<b>EXTERNAL FACTORS.....</b>	<b>55</b>
1.	The United States.....	56
2.	The European Union .....	60
3.	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization.....	64
4.	The Balkans .....	70
<b>V.</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>		<b>81</b>
<b>INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....</b>		<b>87</b>

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

- Figure 1: IMIA MAP from the U.S. Defense Mapping Agency ..... 42

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## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1: Athens FIR and Greek National Airspace violations, 1985-1998..... 49

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To my wife Alexandra and my children Philippa and Konstantinos for their patience and support.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. GENERAL

Both history and geography have placed Greece at a critical geopolitical area, astride Europe, Asia, and Africa. Situated at the crossroads between East and West, North and South in the eastern Mediterranean, Greece is the only country member of the EU, NATO, and the WEU in this region. Moreover, for centuries the eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans have been a field of intense competition among people of the region, states in the immediate vicinity, and quite often among powerful economic interests.<sup>1</sup> The area is also the place where three great religions were born, many ethnic movements originated, and great civilizations flourished - and in certain cases perished. The eastern Mediterranean has been, for generations, at the center of strategic interests and continues to retain that distinction, irrespective of power adjustments or global turmoil.

Within this environment the two most persistent and mutually important Greek security problems concerned the Turks and the Balkan Slavs.<sup>2</sup> Regarding its northern Balkan neighbors, with the exception of Yugoslavia, Greece's relations with Albania and Bulgaria remained poor in the first decades after the Second World War. Although the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of Yugoslavia unleashed a new set of regional dynamics and added the "Macedonian" issue to Greece's security

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<sup>1</sup> George Prevelakis, *Geopolitiki tis Elladas* (Geopolitics of Greece), Libro, 1998. In his book, Prevelakis describes the different perceptions to the importance of the Aegean Sea and Greek peninsula based on the various strategic interests of the states involved in the region (in Greek).

<sup>2</sup> For Greek security problems with the Balkan Slavs see, F.Stephen Larrabee, *Greek Security Concerns in the Balkans*, RAND Institution, 1999. Also, Thanos Veremis, *Greek Security: Issues and Politics*, Adelphi Papers No.179, IISS 1982.

concerns, relations with these countries have significantly improved since then.<sup>3</sup> Starting with Bulgaria in the 1980s, FYROM and Albania in 1994 and 1996 respectively, cooperation has increased not only in the economic, technological, and environmental sectors but in some cases has also extended to defense issues.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, relations with Turkey, despite periods of détente and rapprochement efforts<sup>5</sup> have led nowhere. The 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus and the 1996 Imia (Kardak)<sup>6</sup> crisis are only the tip of the iceberg on a series of incidents between the two countries in the last fifty years. Outsiders very often view this long-standing hostility, marked by mutual suspicion and distrust, with parochial concern. This is understandable given the strategic importance of the region. However, situations of ethnic conflict are far too complex to solve with simplistic notions such as the application of common sense, goodwill and proper understanding of common interests.

Closely following Greece's relations with its neighbors, the country's military strategy has changed twice since the end of World War II. Before that war, Greek defense

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.331.

<sup>4</sup> Today Greece is the largest foreign investor in FYROM and neighboring Bulgaria. In September 1996, the Hellenic Navy held the first exercise with the Albanian Navy under the code name, "Poseidon 96." The exercise intended to improve training and introduce NATO standards to the Albanian Navy. In addition, the two countries have signed a 20-year "special ties" agreement and Greece contributed a large force to the U.N-sponsored humanitarian relief effort in the wake of Albania's economic collapse and civil breakdown in 1998.

<sup>5</sup> See M. James Wilkinson's, *Moving Beyond Conflict Prevention to Reconciliation: Tackling Greek-Turkish Hostility*, A report to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, June 1999, p.6.

<sup>6</sup> Geographical locations will referred with the Greek names first and the Turkish ones (if there are different) following in parentheses.

planning had focused on threats coming from the North (especially from Bulgaria<sup>7</sup>) and to a lesser extent from Turkey. Once the war was over, the Cold War realities of the bipolar world led Greece (which was, by 1952, a NATO member) to adjust its military planning within the context of a containment policy against communism expansionism and a potential offensive from the Warsaw Pact.

The crisis in Cyprus resulted in the second reorientation of Greece's strategic doctrine. Turkey's invasion of Cyprus and Ankara's claims on the Aegean Sea were perceived by Greek policy-makers as revisionist and expansionist actions and forced Greece to focus on Turkey as the main threat to its security.<sup>8</sup> The lessons drawn from 1974 made painfully obvious to the Greek elite and public that participation in security organizations such as NATO and bilateral alliances as with the U.S. did not provide sufficient guarantees for Greece's defense and made the search for a new doctrine vital.<sup>9</sup> As a result from 1974 onwards, Greece has started modernizing its armed forces, diversifying weapon procurements, and developing its domestic defense industry.

However, what are the policies that would cease the erosion of Greece's credibility and deter Turkey from making further claims in the Aegean? How could

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<sup>7</sup> The reason was Bulgaria's claims over Greek Macedonia and western Thrace and its demands for an exit into the Aegean. During the German occupation in WW II, Bulgaria in practice incorporated most of eastern Macedonia and western Thrace without the formality of declaring war on Greece. After the war, Greece's main concern over Macedonia was to maintain its territorial status quo. The efforts to integrate Macedonia in a state under Bulgarian influence were abandoned thirty years later, when in 1975 the initiative for a multilateral Balkan relationship by Greek Prime Minister Karamanlis had positive response from Bulgarian President Zhivkov.

<sup>8</sup> "The central axis of our [Greece's] military strategy is the deterrence of the Turkish threat and secondary from risks steaming from other directions." (Quoted from the *White Paper of the Hellenic Armed Forces*, Mod, Athens 2000, p.34).

<sup>9</sup> The following chapter will address the country's previous defense posture and why during the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus when tested it failed.

Greece reverse the post-1974 situation in Cyprus, which favors Turkey? The doctrine of deterrence is relatively new in the Greek strategic thinking, though it is the cornerstone of national security policies not only of superpowers but also of smaller nations.<sup>10</sup> It breaks new ground since it attempts to introduce the analytical tools of deterrence strategy in the Greek defense realities. In 1993, the term “extended” was added to align the military and diplomatic aspects of Greek strategy to the just solution of the Cyprus issue.<sup>11</sup>

The following sections first present the elements that this strategy takes into account including a brief historic evolution and an in-depth threat analysis as perceived by Greek officials and analysts. This thesis then examines various cases of Greek-Turkish interaction that resulted in crises, which had strong probabilities for an all out confrontation. The question to be answered is whether this doctrine can alter the pay-off structure between the two countries and increase the prospects for a long-term cooperation. Indeed, the thesis concludes that if this strategy is credible (both in military balance and political will), consistent, and coherent the adversary should in his own interest avoid certain courses of action.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the desired outcome is achieved by providing him with the incentive to cooperate. Turkish security considerations as well as

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<sup>10</sup> See for example Ariel Levite’s, *Chapter 10: Reflections on Deterrence Beyond the Superpower Context, on Deterrence in the Middle East*, edited by A. Klieman and A. Levite, JCSS Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1993.

<sup>11</sup> “In order to deter the Turkish threat, Greece and Cyprus decided to create a “Joint Defense Area”. The implementation of this initiative has a purely defensive nature and aims to deter or face any aggressive action against any of the participating parties.” (Quoted from the *White Paper of the Hellenic Armed Forces*, MoD, Athens 2000, p.35).

<sup>12</sup> “...a useful distinction can be made between the *application* of force and the *threat* of force. Deterrence is concerned with the exploitation of potential force.” (Quoted from *The Strategy of Conflict* by Thomas Schelling, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1963, p.9).

the role of external actors, namely the U.S, NATO, EU, and the Balkans are also considered.

## **B. INTENTION OF THE THESIS**

### **1. Purpose**

This thesis will evaluate Greece's doctrine of deterrence and determine if it can create an environment that increases the prospects for reconciliation and conflict prevention in southeastern Europe, focusing mainly on the relations between Greece and Turkey. The questions to be answered are:

- Which are the elements that the doctrine takes into account?
- What is the rationale behind the doctrine?
- Can the doctrine alter the payoff structure of Greek-Turkish interaction and increase the prospects of a long-term cooperation?

### **2. Significance**

The focus of international security moves from Central Europe and the outdated conflict between East and West, to the European perimeter and particularly to the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Thus, the importance of the issues involved in this thesis is apparent for various reasons. On the one hand by evaluating the current Greek strategic thinking and capturing what Greek officials and analysts seem to believe about their security problems, will help to explain the strategic behavior of the country in peace, crisis, and war. On the other hand, the continuation of Greek-Turkish rivalry is not just a

bilateral problem that can trigger a war between the two countries.<sup>13</sup> It is also of broader European and U.S. concern that threatens NATO's southern flank cohesion and endangers the already fragile stability in the region.

The significance that Greece attributes to the maintenance of a credible and efficient deterrence is evident by its defense expenditures. Expenditures that correspond to an average of 4.54 percent of the country's GNP<sup>14</sup> over the last decade, the highest among its NATO partners. Furthermore, strained relations between the two NATO members often create various disagreements inside the Alliance over unified command structures, overflight clearances, or exercise procedures. Finally, the four on-going and mutually supportive processes, verify the interests of the Euro-Atlantic community in stabilizing this turbulent area on the periphery of Europe. The *Stability Pact*, NATO's *Southeastern Europe Initiative (SEEI)*, *Southeastern Europe Defense Ministerial (SEDM)*, and *Bilateral security cooperation and engagement* are all efforts<sup>15</sup> of the same strategy that aim to stabilize and bring peace to a precarious region torn by ethnic-hatred and political uncertainty. Therefore, an evaluation of the doctrine and its implications on Greek-Turkish relations should be considered helpful.

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<sup>13</sup> On January 31, 1996, Greece and Turkey came close to war in the Aegean when naval units from the two countries faced off around Imia (Kardak) group of uninhabited islets. See chapter III for more details.

<sup>14</sup> Source: *White Paper of the Hellenic Armed Forces*, MoD, Athens 2000, p.145 (Development of the MoD budget and of the overall defense expenditures in proportion to the gross national product).

<sup>15</sup> For brief information on these initiatives see, *Strengthening Transatlantic Security*, U.S DoD, December 2000, p.29.

### **3. Methodology-Hypothesis**

This thesis explores the elements of the Greek doctrine of deterrence. It is a single case study and the main assumption is that Greece and Turkey are in a conflict and each participant is trying to win. Although there are many issues involved in such an analysis, and the ability of each part to gain its ends depends to an important degree on the choices or the decisions that the other part will make, it is not the scope of this thesis to provide an analytical framework of all aspects. However, a description to a certain extent of the related topics is mandatory in providing the reader with an understandable background, and a word of caution is in order. For the purposes of the thesis, more coherence is imposed on Greek strategy than actually is the case. Yet, there is a remarkable degree of continuity in it since 1974.

The exogenous factors that have the most substantial impact on influencing the doctrine and these are the following:

- The Post-Cold war environment and the barriers to a Greek-Turkish détente.
- The asymmetries that magnify this threat.
- Turkish Post-Cold war role and security considerations.
- The role of external actors, namely NATO, U.S., and EU.

Finally the hypothesis to be proven and the main argument of this thesis is that the current doctrine constitutes a unilateral strategy on the part of Greece to change the payoff structure of the Greek-Turkish interaction, an objective that might increase the prospects of cooperation. The behavior that Greece had adopted in the past was not one that could inflict sufficient cost on Turkey if the latter decided to pursue a hostile strategy. Thus, Greek defense policy provided Turkey with no incentive to cooperate and

every reason to defect as long as its military and geopolitical advantage was overwhelming. The post-1974 strategy attempts to produce security by strengthening deterrence and is a never-ending effort, aiming to influence the calculus of the adversary in the cost / benefit equation.

## **II. GREEK DEFENSE POLICY**

This chapter introduces the reader to the current Greek strategic thinking. A threat analysis, as perceived by Greek policy-makers (based on statements by Turkish leading politicians, diplomatic initiatives, and military preparations) will explain the reasons that Turkey is considered the main threat to their security. An examination of the elements of deterrence strategy indicates what Greece has developed to handle this threat and the role of military power in managing this problem. However, a reference on strategy definitions and deterrence concepts as well as a historical overview of Greek defense posture are critical, since they will clarify and provide the necessary background.

### **A. DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS**

Military strategy traditionally refers to the planning and deployment of military resources to win major campaigns against a foe or to achieve victory in war itself.<sup>16</sup> It is of course a component of a state's "grand strategy," and represents a concept that includes its economic, psychological, and diplomatic resources.<sup>17</sup> The state's theory of how it can best achieve protection for itself.<sup>18</sup> The role of grand strategy is to bring together and direct all the above resources of a nation, for the attainment of its national

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<sup>16</sup> Karl Von Clausewitz, in his book, *On War*, defines military strategy as "the art of the employment of battles as a means to gain the object of war." In other words, strategy "forms the plan of the war, maps out the proposed course of the different campaigns which compose the war, and regulates the battles to be fought in each." Quoted from B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1968, p.333.

<sup>17</sup> See for an extensive analysis of this point, B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1968.

<sup>18</sup> See, Edward M. Earle, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy*, Princeton University press, 1971, p.viii.

policy. However, as Liddell Hart said, “The two categories, although convenient for discussion, can never be truly divided into separate compartments because each not only influences but merges into the other<sup>19</sup>.<sup>20</sup>”

Military doctrines are key components of a country’s national defense policy or grand strategy. They can be broken into three different categories: offensive, defensive, and deterrent.<sup>20</sup> Offensive doctrines intend to disarm an adversary - to destroy his armed forces. Defensive doctrines intend to deny an adversary the goal that he seeks. Deterrent doctrines aim to penalize an aggressor – to raise his costs without reference to reducing one’s own.<sup>21</sup> Doctrines are important for two reasons. First, the doctrines held by the states within a system influence the quality of international political life. According to their nature - offensive, defensive, or deterrent - they affect the probability and intensity of arms races and of wars. Second, a military doctrine affects the security of the state that holds it. Countries whose political objectives and military doctrine are poorly reconciled, can lead to both war and defeat, thus putting at risk the state’s survival.<sup>22</sup> Following this concept Greece’s strategic doctrine will be viewed in this thesis as the state’s theory of how it can best provide security for itself. The focus will be the political-military rationale of the country’s doctrine and will deal neither with broader national defense policy nor with the operational elements of this doctrine.

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<sup>19</sup> B. H. Liddell Hart. *Strategy*. Praeger Publishers, New York, 1968, p.335.

<sup>20</sup> See Barry R. Posen. *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars*, Cornell Studies in security affairs, 1984.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16

Smaller states threatened by more powerful adversaries often resort to deterrent doctrines. Deterrence is by no means a post WW II phenomenon.<sup>23</sup> However, it is with the advent of the nuclear age that it became not only a common practice, but also a preoccupation of theorists.<sup>24</sup> During this period, deterrence strategy aimed mainly at preventing aggression against the United States and its allies by the hostile Communist power centers. It was built up as a theory based on the use of nuclear weapons.

Deterrence consists of an effort by one actor to persuade an opponent not to take action against his interests by convincing him that the costs and risks of doing so will outweigh the benefits he hopes to secure. Mearsheimer gives a broader definition of deterrence when he describes it as “a function of the relationship between the perceived political benefits resulting from military action and a number of non military as well as military costs and risks<sup>25</sup>.” According to what it aims to achieve, it can be divided in the following two categories:

- Punishment of an adversary (when it involves threats to destroy large portions of an opponent’s civilian population and industry).
- Denial of an adversary’s objectives (when it involves threats to convince the opponent that he will not attain his goals on the battlefield).

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<sup>23</sup> See Alexander George’s and Richard Smoke’s, *Chapter 1: Deterrence in History*, on Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice, Columbia University Press, New York, 1974, pp.11-34.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Jervis characterized it “... probably the most influential school of thought.” *Deterrence theory revisited*, World politics, April 1979, p.289.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted from, John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, Cornell University press, Ithaca and London, 1983, p.14.

The first category is usually associated with nuclear weapons while the second one involves the concept of conventional deterrence.<sup>26</sup> This notion - that conventional deterrence is based on denial - creates the uncertainty and makes it an inherently weaker deterrent than punishment.<sup>27</sup> Its practice requires an investment of resources and an important aspect for the success of deterrence strategy is the potential adversary's sensitivity to cost. Finally, it is less complex if we think conventional deterrence in terms of a dynamic process instead of a cost/benefit calculation. This process involves determining who we will attempt to deter, from doing what, and by what means.

## B. GREEK DEFENSE POSTURE - A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The end of WW II found Greece separated into adversarial factions of Greeks, battling for power and authority, supported by potent external sponsors; the nationalists sided with the British and later the United States, and the communists sided with Tito's Yugoslavia and a reluctant Soviet Union. The failure to implement the Varkiza's agreement (February 12, 1945) provisions together with political unrest resulted in a civil war that in early 1947 began assuming large-scale proportions.<sup>28</sup> At this moment and most critical point in Greece's postwar tragedy, British interference ran out of steam and the United States was invited to fill the vacuum. The transition policy was named the

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>27</sup> See Richard K. Betts, *Conventional Deterrence: Predictive Uncertainty and Policy Confidence*, World Politics, Vol.37, No.2, January 1985, p.177.

<sup>28</sup> For a description of the events during that era, see T. Couloumbis, J. Petropoulos, and H. Psomiades, *Foreign Interference in Greek Politics*, Pella pub., New York, 1976, pp.103-153.

“Truman Doctrine,”<sup>29</sup> and it signaled a radical turn in the traditionally isolationist and non-interfering (at least in Europe during peacetime) policies of the United States. The NATO membership that followed in 1952 was mainly an addition to the bilateral relationship between Greece and the United States dating back to 1947.

Thus, the security of Greece after World War II was determined to a large extent by its bilateral and multilateral commitments. Its alignment with the U.S.<sup>30</sup> and NATO placed the country’s security considerations in the broader framework of NATO’s policy<sup>31</sup> in Europe. The role of the Greek armed forces was based on the U.S premise that the main security problem was one of an internal rather than an external nature. Greece was to have “a military establishment capable of maintaining internal security in order to avoid communist domination<sup>32</sup>. ”

Once the role of domestic control was accomplished, the obligations of the Greek armed forces towards the alliance were to a large extent considered fulfilled. Defense

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<sup>29</sup> President Truman said in his speech to a joint session of Congress on March 12, 1947: “It is necessary only to glance at a map and realize that the survival and integrity of the Greek nation are of grave importance in a much wider situation. If Greece should fall under the control of an armed [communist] minority the effect upon its neighbor, Turkey, would be immediate and serious. Confusion and disorder might well spread throughout the entire Middle East.” [Available on line: <http://academic.mbc.edu/gbowen/truman.htm>].

<sup>30</sup> An alignment that involved strong interference in Greek affairs and as the minister councilor of the Greek embassy in Washington, Mr. Economou-Gouras said about the U.S plan “it would be accomplished by a limitation in some measure of the sovereign rights of Greece.” Quoted from T. Couloumbis, J. Petropoulos, and H. Psomiades, *Foreign Interference in Greek Politics*, Pella pub., New York, 1976, pp.116.

<sup>31</sup> Describing this relationship Athanasios Platias says: “The extent and the intensity of NATO involvement in Greek defense planning, with the foremost example being the period of the 1950’s, froze all Greek initiatives.” Quoted from, *Greece’s Strategic Doctrine: In Search of Autonomy and Deterrence*, on the Greek-Turkish conflict in the 1990’s, edited by Dimitri Constas, St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1991.

<sup>32</sup> See U.S State Department, *Foreign Relations of the U.S, 1951*, Washington DC, 1974, p.452.

against aggression from the Warsaw Pact was considered a secondary task, since the role of the Greek army was to cause delay until the alliance's powerful components were set in motion. The military implications of these role assignments - internal security and delay action - degraded significantly the country's ability to defend against an attack autonomously, since mainly its air and naval components were weak and composed of second-hand U.S surplus material.<sup>33</sup> The 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus<sup>34</sup> clearly demonstrated this weakness and opted Greek policy-makers to reconsider the country's post-World War II defense approach. What was thought to be a U.S<sup>35</sup> and NATO unwillingness over Turkey's determination to impose her own solution on the island was expressed by the Greek withdrawal<sup>36</sup> from the military arm of the alliance.<sup>37</sup> In 1974

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<sup>33</sup> See Yiannis Roubatis, *The U.S and the Operational Responsibilities of the Greek Armed Forces, 1947-1977*, Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora, vol.6, Spring 1979, pp.39-57.

<sup>34</sup> The events of 1974 are remembered by Turks as a legal intervention to prevent the bloodbath that in their view was certain to follow the coup attempt by the rightist Greek coup. Greeks recall the history as an invasion by the Turkish army, which seized and still illegally occupies territory of the sovereign state of Cyprus.

<sup>35</sup> One of the reasons of U.S indecisiveness is considered the paralysis of the presidency induced by Watergate and the imminent resignation of President Nixon as well as its involvement in the Vietnam war. In addition, Kissinger states that it was an ethnic conflict "for which there were few guideposts in the American experience." Quoted from Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1999, p.195.

<sup>36</sup> Explaining Greece's withdrawal from the military structure command of NATO, Prime Minister Karamanlis said that "I had to choose. Either to declare war on Turkey or to leave NATO. Between the two I chose the lesser evil." Quoted from Dimitri Bitsios, *Pera Apo ta Synora* (Beyond borders), Estia Press, Athens 1982, p.204.

<sup>37</sup> Renegotiations started in June 1977 and although an understanding was reached in February 1978 between the Commander-in-Chief of the Greek armed forces, General Davos, and the Supreme Commander of NATO, General Haig, Turkey vetoed the decision. The revision by General Haig, after consulting Turkish officials, of the *status quo ante* 1974 asked by the Greeks caused further delays. Finally, Greece entered NATO's military structure in 1980 after further negotiations and new proposals under General Bernard Rogers. See for more details, Thanos Veremis, *Greek Security: Issues and Politics*, Adelphi Papers No.179, IISS 1982, pp.16-22.

Greece discovered that full reliance on NATO for its own needs did not prove to be a guarantee of protection. NATO's inability to protect one ally from the military excesses of the other made a deep impact on Greece and the re-examination of its defense policy imperative.

### C. THREAT ANALYSIS

The action to be prevented is a necessary step in order to recognize the adversary's objectives, the importance he attaches to his actions, and his willingness to take risks.

In the Greek-Turkish dispute, the main sources of contention are the control and sovereignty over the Aegean Sea, the continental shelf under it, and the airspace over it.<sup>38</sup> This situation is further complicated by disagreements over the allocation of the Aegean Sea and its airspace within the framework of NATO. Greece's stance on the above-mentioned issues is that the only legitimate Aegean issue is the delimitation of the continental shelf. The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne did not address this topic and Greece is willing to negotiate it with submission to the International Court of Justice. The rest, Greece argues, constitute unilateral Turkish claims that involve non-negotiable questions of sovereignty.

Turkey's stance is that all the Aegean questions are interrelated and it proposes bilateral talks before resorting to an international mediation. It should be mentioned here

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<sup>38</sup> Since the focus of this thesis is not the Aegean dispute for more information see, Tozun Bahcheli, *Greek-Turkish Relations since 1955*, Boulder, Westview press, 1990. Also, Andrew Wilson, *The Aegean Dispute*, Adelphi Paper No.155, IISS 1979. For the official Turkish and Greek views, see the relevant Ministries of Foreign Affairs. [Available on line for Turkey [www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/ade/default.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/ade/default.htm) and for Greece [www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral/relations.htm](http://www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral/relations.htm)].

that until 1973 and for fifty years since the Lausanne Treaty the Turkish side had made no demands or questioned the existing status quo between the two countries as established by treaties and agreements.<sup>39</sup> These claims forcefully introduced in the Greek-Turkish agenda and followed by invitations to bilateral negotiations aim to convince the international community that there are serious differences between the two countries. Furthermore, official statements, diplomatic initiatives and military preparations have convinced Greek officials and the public that Turkey has adopted a revisionist<sup>40</sup> foreign policy in the area that seeks to alter the regional balance of power in its favor.

## **1. Official Statements**

It should be noted here that in the Turkish political system the armed forces have an institutional and constitutional position unlike any other western nation. The Turkish armed forces, besides having a history of frequent interventions in the country's politics,

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<sup>39</sup> Starting in 1973 emerged the continental shelf rights dispute. In 1974, Turkey demanded that all aircraft approaching Turkish airspace to report their position and flight plan on reaching the Aegean median line (Turkish NOTAM 714) and since 1975 recognizes only a six instead of ten nm Greek airspace (a limit that was not challenged by Turkey since Greece claimed it in 1931 and established by ICAO in 1952). The ratification by Greece in 1995 of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) that includes the provision that states have the right to a territorial sea of up to twelve nm was strongly contested by Turkey that has stated that any extension to these limits would present a *casus belli*. Finally, in 1996 the Imia (Kardak) incident was followed by Turkey's challenge of Greek sovereignty rights over a number of islands and islets.

<sup>40</sup> "Greece has the particularity to face the challenges of a changing international environment and at the same time to face Turkey's revisionist policy towards our country and Cyprus." (Quoted from the *White Paper of the Hellenic Armed Forces*, MoD, Athens 2000, p.28). See also Minister of Defense Athanasios Tsohatzopoulos speech in Greek Parliament on April 23, 2000. [Available on line: [www.mod.gr/information/speeches/000423.htm](http://www.mod.gr/information/speeches/000423.htm)].

constitute a major factor in the formation of its national security policy. The following extracts from statements by leading Turkish politicians are considered by Greek policy-makers as an indication of Turkey's intentions.

"In the Aegean, one must necessarily pursue a dynamic policy. The conditions today are different from the conditions in 1923. Turkey's power has grown. When we talk of the need for dynamic policy, we do not mean that the army must act at once and that we should occupy the islands. Our financial interests need to be safeguarded in the Aegean. Cyprus is the first step towards the Aegean." (Foreign Minister Melih Esenbel, 22.1.75).<sup>41</sup>

"The group of islands situated near the Turkish coasts, including the Dodecanese, must belong to Turkey. Among these we cite Samothrace, Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Kos, Rhodes, and all others, small or large within a distance of 50 km." (Vice-Premier Mr. Turkes, 30/3/76).<sup>42</sup>

"Turkey said from the beginning that the issue was not merely the ownership for Imia (Kardak) rocks, which Turkey claims as its own under international law. There are hundreds of little islands, islets and rocks in the Aegean that their status remains unclear, due to the absence of a comprehensive bilateral agreement between the two countries."

(Turkish Foreign Ministry Spokesman Omer Akbel, 31.1.96).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> This statement is published among others in the semi-official booklet, *Turkish Officials Speak on Turkey's Aims*, Institute of Political studies, Athens 1985.

<sup>42</sup> *Devlet*, 30/3/76.

<sup>43</sup> *Turkish Daily News*, 1/2/96.

“As far as we are concerned there is, indeed, a gray area in the Aegean. The sovereignty over the islets and rocks within this gray area has not been settled by existing treaties. As things stand at the moment, the heir to the Ottoman Empire is the Turkish Republic, and, therefore, according to international practice, when treaties are not clear about the status of certain territories that once belonged to a particular state, these tend to be handed over automatically to the successor state.” (President Demirel 15.5.1999).<sup>44</sup>

## 2. Diplomatic Initiatives

In addition, since 1973 Turkey has carried out several diplomatic initiatives aimed to undermine Greek sovereignty in the Aegean and Thrace.

- The de facto questioning of Greece’s sovereign rights over its continental shelf rights through the granting of research licenses to the Turkish government petroleum company (TRAO) and the publication of a map indicating the limits of its continental shelf rights to the west of Greece’s easternmost islands.
- The issue of NOTAM 714 in August 1974 by which Turkey unilaterally extended its area of responsibility up to the middle of the Aegean.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Turkey refuses to report the flight schedules of its military aircraft to Athens FIR.
- The passage of an arbitrary law in 1989 establishing Turkish “Search and Rescue” rights over half of the Aegean, in direct violation of ICAO rules.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Source: Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [Available on line: [www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral\\_relations.htm](http://www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral_relations.htm)]

<sup>45</sup> Greece re-acted by issuing NOTAM 1157, declaring the Aegean air routes to Turkey unsafe due to the conflicting orders. In 1980, Turkey withdrew its demand and immediately afterwards Greece recalled its notification as well.

- In response to the Greek Parliament's ratification of the Law of Sea Convention on 31 May 1995, the Turkish National Assembly, on 8 June 1995, unanimously adopted a resolution that gave the Turkish government all powers, including military ones, for the "protection" of Turkish vital "interests," in the event that Greece ever exercised its internationally established rights concerning the extension of its territorial waters from six to twelve miles.<sup>47</sup>

- Accuses Greece of illegally militarizing the North Aegean and Dodecanese islands and tries to undermine their strategic value in allied fora.<sup>48</sup>

### **3. Military Preparations and Actions**

The Greeks consider the deployment of Turkish armed forces as a further threat indicator. Examples of such actions include the overall deployment of the Turkish armed forces, as well as the creation in 1975 of a new army corps (the Fourth Army or the so-called Aegean Army). Equipped with a large number of landing craft, this corps is

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<sup>46</sup> Published in the Turkish Government Gazette on January 7, 1989, this code arbitrary fixed the Turkish SAR area of responsibility to include a large part of the Black Sea, half of the Aegean, and a part of the eastern Mediterranean that included the occupied part of Cyprus.

<sup>47</sup> The Turkish Foreign Ministry stressed that Greek insistence on a twelve nm limit would annul even the [Madrid 1997 Communiqué] accord while it would consist a *casus belli*. *Cumhuriyet*, 11/7/1997.

At the NATO summit in Madrid in July 1997, Greek Prime Minister Simitis and Turkish President Demirel issued a communiqué confirming six points agreed on by their foreign ministers to advance peaceful relations. [Available on line: <http://secretary.state.gov/www/briefings/statements/970708b.html>].

<sup>48</sup> The militarization of the islands took place only after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, undoubtedly as an act of fear of another possible Turkish invasion. Turkey accuses Greece for violation of the relevant provisions of the Lausanne (1923) and Paris (1947) treaties and Greece contends that the demilitarization of the islands cannot deprive its natural rights to defend the islands if their security is threatened (Article 51 of the United Nations Charter foresees that every country has the inalienable right of legitimate defense of its territory). Specifically, Turkey's objections on the militarization of Lemnos have resulted in boycott by Greece of several allied military exercises in the Aegean.

excluded from NATO command, and is positioned primarily along Turkey's Aegean coast.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, since the mid-80s and especially after the end of cold war, Turkey has initiated a major re-armament program<sup>50</sup> capable of changing both the quantitative and qualitative balance of power in its favor.<sup>51</sup> The employment of the Turkish Air Force - strongly improved with the acquisition of 240 F-16 fighter aircraft<sup>52</sup> under the Peace Onyx I and II programs - as a constant source of pressure in the Greek-Turkish relations regardless of their state, creates further tensions and reasons for an inadvertent confrontation. The violations of Athens Flight Information Region (F.I.R) and Greek airspace on an almost daily basis, sometimes with up to 52 in a single day,<sup>53</sup> and the resulting dogfights with Greek fighter aircraft have created an undeclared war over the Aegean that has become in the Greek eyes undeniable proof of Turkish expansionist goals.

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<sup>49</sup> As Monteagle Sterns says "Whether the Turkish Fourth Army numbers 30,000 troops, as the Turks claim, or 150,000, as the Greeks claim, whether it is a training command, as Ankara insists, or an amphibious assault force, as Athens says, these are forces deployed in the wrong place at the wrong time. They are certainly not needed to defend Turkey from a possible military thrust from the Greek islands, which would be suicidal from the Greeks to contemplate". *Entangled Allies, U.S Policy toward Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus*, Council on foreign relations press, New York 1992, p.98.

<sup>50</sup> In April 1997, Turkey outlined a 10-year defense procurement program worth US \$31 billion. A major aim of this program was to reduce reliance on foreign arms suppliers by further developing its domestic industry. Source: *Jane's World Armies*, 18 June 1999. Also Lale Saribrahimoglu, "Turkey Reveals New Defence Programmes," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, 16 October 1996, p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> It must be noted that Turkish defense acquisitions are motivated in part by factors irrelevant to Greek-Turkish relations and this issue will be addressed in chapter III.

<sup>52</sup> With the completion of this program, Turkish Air Force (TUAF) enjoys over the Hellenic Air Force (HAF) a 2:1 ratio in third generation fighter aircraft.

<sup>53</sup> *Athens News Agency*, 10/12/1997.

## D. GREEK STRATEGY ELEMENTS

Based on these threatening signals and the recent historical experience - the 1974 invasion of Cyprus - Greek analysts<sup>54</sup> believe that Turkey is likely to adopt *fait accompli* diplomacy against Greece when the following two preconditions are fulfilled:

- When a “window of vulnerability” opens for Greece. Meaning a period when Greece is either not capable or not willing to resist a Turkish incursion or “hot” incident.
- When a “window of opportunity” opens for Turkey. Meaning a period when it is unlikely for major powers with interests in the region to oppose a new Turkish aggression.

Since the central axis of Greece’s military strategy is the implementation of an efficient deterrence policy against the Turkish aggression, it has focused on three main elements to solve its security problem. These are the concepts of defensive sufficiency, flexible response, and joint defense area.<sup>55</sup>

### 1. Defensive Sufficiency

Deterrence can succeed only if the combination of incentives and intimidation is credible. The first one requires demonstrating political will, willingness to sustain economic costs, to endure human casualties, and to take risks in support of the deterrence efforts. The second one requires the military force that is invoked as part of the deterrence action to be clearly capable of defending or imposing great costs on potential

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<sup>54</sup> Among them Thanos Dokos, *The Joint Defense Area doctrine*, Yearbook of the Institute of International Relations, Sideris pub., Athens, 1996, and Athanasios Platias, *Elliniki Apotreptiki Stratigiki* (Greek Deterrence Strategy), Papazeses pub., Athens 1979 (in Greek).

<sup>55</sup> See *White Paper of the Hellenic Armed Forces*, MoD, Athens 2000, p.34.

attackers through punishment. In other words, it works better when the side threatening holds the military advantage or is able to maintain a sufficient balance of power.<sup>56</sup> Defensive sufficiency focuses on providing and securing all those defense assets as well as the quality of the human resources necessary for the deterrence of any threat. At the same time, it implies a systematic effort to introduce new technologies and weapon systems that will ensure the maximization of the country's "cost-effectiveness" ratio.

The first steps taken by Greece towards this direction<sup>57</sup> in the aftermath of Cyprus invasion were:

- The strengthening of the naval and air components neglected during the pre-1974 period with new units.
- The strengthening of the Military High Command for Interior and islands (ASDEN), which is not assigned to NATO.
- The diversification of foreign arms sources to reduce the vulnerability caused by dependence on only one supplier.<sup>58</sup>

Since deterrence is stronger when a state invests in cultivating its military might, in line with this principle the post-1974 Greek governments, as a rule, invest in defense.

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<sup>56</sup> The balance between the two countries, especially in the air, was fairly stable in the late 70's early 80's after Greece purchased new F-4s, A-7s and F-1s aircraft in contrast to Turkey's acquisition of only new F-4s. When in mid-80's Turkey initiated a major program of Air Force modernization (Peace Onyx I and II) it gained significant advantage that resulted in an increase of airspace violations in the 90's as well as the Imia (Kardak) crisis.

<sup>57</sup> In international relations theory, this is called a strategy of internal balancing. See Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, McGraw-Hill, 1979, p.168.

<sup>58</sup> Starting in 1975, Greece acquired fighters, Main Battle Tanks, and ships from France in an effort to reduce its full dependence on U.S sources. In the early 80s, Germany was added in the arms suppliers and become a significant source of submarines and Main Battle Tanks. Finally, in the late 90's Russia was introduced in the suppliers list with the acquirement in 1999 of TOR M1 shorad missile systems for the Greek army and hovercraft for the Hellenic Navy.

Indeed, compared to any other NATO country Greece currently spends the highest percentage of its gross national product (in 1999 4.87 percent) for defense purposes. Another dimension of resource allocation that must be taken into account is the share of manpower devoted to defense. Greece allots more manpower to its defense - approximately 5 percent of the labor force - than any other NATO member does.<sup>59</sup>

However, the quest for quantitative symmetry with Turkey has inherent limitations. As the late Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou mentioned in parliament in January 1987, "...our competition with Turkey along the quantitative dimension leads nowhere. Hence, emphasis should be given primarily to the qualitative improvement of our defense systems in its entirety<sup>60</sup>."

Greek defense planners concerned that deterrence might fail if Turkey calculates Greece's weakness to maintain the balance initiated their own major re-armament plans. The Governmental National Security council (KYSEA<sup>61</sup>) approved in November 1996<sup>62</sup> the integrated medium-term development and modernization program of the armed forces (EMPAE 1996-2000), which included the distribution of 4 trillion drachmas (~US\$12 billion) over the next eight years.<sup>63</sup> Four years later, in July 2000 the same council

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<sup>59</sup> Source: *White Paper of the Hellenic Armed Forces*, MoD, Athens 2000, p.114

<sup>60</sup> See *Journal of Parliamentary Debates*, 23 January 1987, p.2914 (in Greek).

<sup>61</sup> KYSEA is Greece's main decision-making instrument that formulates the national defense policy of the country and approves the long and mid-term programs for the development of the defense capability of the country as well as major programs for the procurement and production of defense assets and equipment.

<sup>62</sup> See "Ambitious Arms Program Takes Greece in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," Athens news 14/11/96, p.A01.

<sup>63</sup> To this day, contracts of a total value of 85 percent of the allocated funds from the 1996-2000 program have been signed or are in the process of being signed, with over 50 percent going for the modernization of the Air Force. Source: *White Paper of the Hellenic Armed Forces*, Athens 2000, p.151.

approved the EMPAE 2001-2005 program which provided a further four tDr for defense procurements.<sup>64</sup> The planning philosophy for both five-year defense budgets is the emphasis on new technologies and the procurement of communication and intelligence gathering systems as well as “smart weapons” and other force multipliers that will achieve air and sea control. As Greek Prime Minister Simitis said after the council’s decision:

Greece today faces a great challenge. Its participation as an equal in the European Union. But at the same time it must deal with Turkish provocation. We have made clear to Turkey for a long time now that our position is that we do not seek anything but we will also not give up anything, not an inch of Greek territory. To employ this principle we have to have a strong deterrent force. On land, we are developing flexible and rapidly mobile forces with great firepower. On water, we are creating a naval strength capable of securing control of the Greek seas and pushing back any invasion from the sea. In the air, we are achieving air power capable of securing the country’s air defense, of maintaining the required air superiority and of providing the necessary air cover for army and naval units.<sup>65</sup>

The Hellenic Air Force received the lion’s share from the first modernization program, something that significantly enhanced its capabilities. The procurement of additional F-16 Block 50 plus and Mirage 2000-5 aircraft, Patriot and NG Crotale surface to air missiles, standoff missiles (Exocet, Apache, AFDS) as well as Erieye Airborne Early Warning aircraft are some of the major programs that aim to restore the military balance between the two countries, mainly their air assets.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> See *Eleftherotypia* 29/7/00.

<sup>65</sup> See *Athens News*, 14/11/96.

<sup>66</sup> For a detailed analysis of Greek programs and acquisitions see *White Paper of the Hellenic Armed Forces*, MoD, Athens 2000, p.152-158.

Part of the effort to improve the country's military capabilities and the search for qualitative advantage in the human resources field is the 5-year term volunteer institution.<sup>67</sup> Since its introduction in the early 90s and until today, this institution accounts for ten percent of the military personnel, with the responsibility of operating the more sophisticated weapons in the armed forces inventory.

## **2. Flexible Response**

At the same time, Greek strategists try to develop multiple options for responding to the outbreak of different kinds of conflicts, from simple hot incidents to generalized warfare, with forces and strategies appropriate to each case. Flexible response refers to the capability of military forces to adapt and react effectively to an enemy threat or attack with the appropriate action for the specific circumstances. It emerged as a concept in the 1960s, when the conventional force balance in central Europe between NATO and the Warsaw Pact was significantly improved, thus justifying the shift of deterrence doctrine from massive retaliation to flexible response.<sup>68</sup> A critical component and requirement of flexible response is the possession of armed forces that are highly mobile and upgraded<sup>69</sup> and entails significant increase in defense expenditures.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Greece is using the draft system to fulfil its conscripts needs.

<sup>68</sup> See Richard K. Betts, *Conventional Deterrence: Predictive Uncertainty and Policy Confidence*, World Politics, Vol.37, No.2, January 1985, p.156.

<sup>69</sup> See Alexander George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, Columbia University press, 1974, p.31.

<sup>70</sup> When the U.S in the early Kennedy administration adopted this policy, as a way of handling crisis, increased significantly their defense expenditures. See William Kaufmann, *The McNamara Strategy*, New York: Harper and Row, 1964.

The Imia (Kardak) incident in 1996 was viewed as a crisis created by Turkey with the aim of forcing Greece to accept de facto situations in the Aegean.<sup>71</sup> Following this incident Greece started to re-examine those mechanisms (i.e. crisis handling council, operational plans) and equip its armed forces in such a way that it will allow them to react successfully in future similar situations. To conform to the new requirements changes were initiated in the force structure (i.e. the brigade is established as the main operating unit) and rapid reaction forces were created (2<sup>nd</sup> Army Corps).

The political and military rationale is that when a medium or low-level incident occurs, Greece will not be forced either to resort to an unlimited escalation threat (which after all might not be that credible) or disengage with undesirable results. A range of options will be available to react to a potential crisis instead of a black and white situation. The preferred alternative solution is a response at an equal level<sup>72</sup> with the Turkish action. This response can take two forms. The first one is a symmetrical one that involves a reaction at the same place, time, and level of the provocation. The second one involves the shifting of the reaction to a location that is better suited for the application of its strengths against the adversary's weaknesses.<sup>73</sup> Flexible response is viewed as the most effective way<sup>74</sup> of neutralizing a potential Turkish aggressive action and a pre-

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<sup>71</sup> See Stelios Alifantis, *Eveliki Antapodosi* (Flexible Response), Stratigiki No.25, October 1999, p.9 (in Greek).

<sup>72</sup> "A response at an equal level will be the minimum reaction expected." Quoted from an interview of the Chief of Joint Staff A. Tzoganis. See *Vima tis Kiriakis*, 20/7/97.

<sup>73</sup> See Athanasios Platias, *Skepseis gia tin Elliniki Ipsihi Stratigiki* (Thoughts for Greek Grand Strategy), Yearbook of International Relations, Sideris, Athens 1997 (in Greek).

<sup>74</sup> Stelios Alifantis, *Eveliki Antapodosi* (Flexible Response), Stratigiki No.25, October 1999, p.10 (in Greek).

requisite for avoiding further crisis escalation in case diplomatic or third party mediations fail.

### **3. Cyprus and the Joint Defense Area Concept**

Cyprus has been on the agenda of the international community for decades with little hope for a settlement in sight, despite numerous UN and U.S.-sponsored negotiation processes.<sup>75</sup> The dispute over Cyprus is also an arena in which broader Greek and Turkish nationalism has operated and clashed. Both countries have been extremely involved in the politics of the island and, indeed, a special role for them was formalized by international treaties making them guarantors of the island, along with the British, with the right to station a modest number of troops. This settlement, known as the London-Zurich Agreements and signed in 1960, called for a “partnership government” with a Greek-Cypriot president and a Turkish-Cypriot vice-president. The agreements also allowed for Greece or Turkey to send troops to the island if either felt its population on Cyprus was threatened. The London-Zurich Agreements did not last long and in 1963, fighting broke out, with each side accusing the other of unprovoked killings. The 1963 civil war led to the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force. When the Greek military regime engineered a coup against Greek-Cypriot president Makarios, Turkey responded by invading the island and dividing it in two.

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<sup>75</sup> For Turkish and Greek views on the solution of the Cyprus issue, see Tozun Bahcheli, Theodore Couloumbis, and Patricia Carley, *Greek-Turkish Relations and U.S. Foreign Policy: Cyprus the Aegean and Regional Stability*, U.S. institute of peace (Peace works No.17), Washington, August 1997, p.3 and p.7 respectively.

The Turkish invasion of Cyprus and the occupation of 37 percent of its territory<sup>76</sup> tested the pre-1974 military and political strategy of Greece and resulted in failure. The embarrassment inflicted from the Cyprus crisis demonstrated to Greek policy-makers that the defense posture designed by its allies, at best was not compatible with and at worst was contrary to their national interests. The country had to develop an autonomous defense policy within an allied context that was then referred to as “NATO plus” strategy.<sup>77</sup>

*a. The Emergence of the Concept*

Given the failure to reach a solution in the years after 1974 many advocated that it was time to balance Turkey’s military superiority on the island by reinforcing military and political links between the Greek state and the Cyprus state. The previous strategy between Athens and Lefkosia, centered on the concept “Cyprus decides, Greece supports,” considered Greece to be one of Cyprus many friends. However, what Cyprus wanted was a strong ally. Throughout the years, Turkey had maintained and in some cases made even stronger its position in the negotiating processes.<sup>78</sup> Since the mid 1980s, successive Greek governments declared a *casus belli* concerning the territorial post-1974 status quo in Cyprus. In 1987 Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou declared in parliament:

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<sup>76</sup> In 1983, the Turkish-Cypriots declared themselves a state: The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), an entity so far recognized only by Turkey.

<sup>77</sup> See for example Athanasios Platias, *Chapter 7: Greece’s Strategic Doctrine: In Search for Autonomy and Deterrence*, on Greek-Turkish conflict in the 1990’s, edited by Dimitri Constas, St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1991.

<sup>78</sup> See C. Rozakis, *Elliniki Eksoteriki Politiki kai to Kypriako* (Greek Foreign Policy and the Cyprus issue), on Greece, Turkey, and the Cyprus issue, edited by Yiallouridis-Tsakonas, Athens, 1993, p.193 (in Greek).

In order to avoid misunderstanding, it should be known to friends and foes alike that in case of an attack or invasion against the Greek-Cypriot positions, Greece will not stay out. I have warned that this is a *casus belli*. We hope that our partners in EEC and our allies in NATO will understand the sincerity of our decision to defend Cyprus because if Cyprus is lost, Greece eventually will be lost.<sup>79</sup>

Nevertheless, the strategic coupling<sup>80</sup> of Greek and Cypriot defense policies in a coherent form of doctrine was not achieved until seven years later. In November 1993, nineteen years after the Turkish invasion, President Clerides and the late Prime Minister Papandreu put together the new policy. A policy sustained by his successor, Prime Minister Simitis, and which has been described as the Joint Defense Area<sup>81</sup> doctrine. Its creation was based on three major considerations:

- To provide Greece and Cyprus with joint defense against the common threat.
- To project credibility, since the Greek deterrence posture could not be realistic if it did not include Cyprus.
- To strengthen the Cyprus entity as a country by increasing its military capabilities.

#### *b. Political and Military Rationale*

The strategic coupling with Cyprus has a strong political and military rationale. The political rationale of the new approach is based on the argument that unless

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<sup>79</sup> See *Journal of Parliamentary Debates*, 23 January 1987, p.2915 (in Greek).

<sup>80</sup> In strategic analysis, this approach is called coupling, namely the alliance between a strong and a weak state facing the same external threat. It is similar to the concept applied by the U.S. in Europe after WW II. See for example, *Post-Cold War: Conflict Deterrence*, Naval Studies Board, National Academy Press, Washington 1997, p.29.

<sup>81</sup> In relevant literature, it is also referred as the Single Defense Space (SDS) or Common Defense Space. For the purposes of this thesis, the term “Joint Defense Area” will be used, since it is the one that this concept is described in the official booklet of Mod, *White paper of the Hellenic Armed Forces*, Athens 2000, p.34.

a certain degree of balance is established, the Greek-Cypriots will be led, sooner or later, to the acceptance of a non-viable solution to the Cyprus issue. The reason behind this argument is that as long as Turkey has an overwhelming military and geopolitical advantage over the island, it has no incentive to cooperate thus making Greek-Cypriots its “strategic hostages<sup>82</sup>. ” Therefore, the coupling improves the negotiating strength of the Greek-Cypriot side and ensures the safety of its population. In addition, it constitutes a successful initiative, since for the first time in Greek-Turkish relations in recent years, Greece takes action and Turkey re-acts.

As Thomas Schelling explains, “the difference between the national homeland and everything “abroad” is the difference between threats that are inherently credible, even if unspoken, and threats that have to be made credible<sup>83</sup>. ” Since Greece’s national interests extend beyond its borders to include the security of another state, the military rationale is a rather straightforward matter. The military leadership has to develop alternative contingencies, whose gradual implementation are intended to incrementally increase Turkey’s cost in case of a new aggression. The credibility of extended deterrence mainly depends not on denial<sup>84</sup> of Turkish objectives in Cyprus but on retaliation. In other words, Greece’s re-action, besides the military support of Cyprus, includes the threat of

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<sup>82</sup> See Christodoulos Yiallouridis, *The Doctrine of Extended Deterrence as a Strategy of Containing Turkish Expansionism*, Yearbook of the Institute of International Relations, Sideris pub., Athens, 1996, p.139 (in Greek).

<sup>83</sup> Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, New Haven and London, Yale University press, 1966, p.36.

<sup>84</sup> Denial is not easy to achieve in this specific theater of war, since it is rather far away from Greece and much closer to Turkey.

an all out war against Turkey in other theaters of operations, namely the Aegean and Thrace.

The major steps taken in recent years for the realization of the doctrine of Joint Defense Area are:

- The strengthening of the military capabilities of Cyprus, with the increase of its defense expenditures<sup>85</sup> and the acquirement of new weapon systems. Emphasis is given mainly on the C3I and air defense areas.<sup>86</sup>
- The construction of the necessary bases and infrastructure in Cyprus and Crete to operate and support naval and air units on deployment from Greek mainland.
- The intensification of military training and joint military exercises.<sup>87</sup>

c. *Turkey's Re-action*

The Joint Defense doctrine agreed by the Greek and Cypriot governments was originally seen as little more than a political ploy by the Greek-Cypriots to gain advantage in the long-running UN negotiations over a reunification settlement. However,

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<sup>85</sup> On May 1998, the Cypriot House of representatives approved a bill to increase the country's defense levy from 3% income tax to a 4%. The new revenue is expected to provide an additional \$80 million for the defense budget. House speaker Spyros Kyprianou said that the bill "sends a message that the people of Cyprus and their representatives are determined to back all efforts for the island's defense, for as long as Turkey continues to occupy part of Cyprus and continues its threats."

<sup>86</sup> Such examples are the procurement from Russia of the air defense system S-300PMU-1 (NATO codename SA-10 "Grumble") with a range of 90 miles and the Alenia Aspide shorad system from Italy. In addition, Cyprus purchased from Russia T-80 MBT and from France MM-40 land-based Exocet missiles to enhance its armor and anti-ship capabilities.

<sup>87</sup> The bi-annual LIVEX "Nikiforos-Toxotis" represents the main effort towards this direction. It involves Greek naval and air units that operate in the area not only from Crete but also from Cyprus. Greek Defense Minister Akis Tsohatzopoulos said, "Greek participation in the exercises will reaffirm the two countries' joint defense doctrine and show that this cooperation is not devoid of content. It is based on specific deeds and actions." *Eleftherotypia*, 2/10/1998.

challenging Turkey's superiority on the island encountered strong opposition, especially after the decision by the Greek-Cypriots to acquire the Russian S-300PMU-1 air defense system on January 1997 and the landing of the first Greek F-16 fighter aircraft on the newly constructed "Andreas Papandreou" Paphos airbase in the following year. These two actions demonstrated that the new doctrine was more profound than they had initially believed. The following two statements on January 1997 by the Defense Minister and the President of the country demonstrate vividly Turkey's re-action:

It appears that, as in the past, the Greek-Cypriot administration considers it in its own interest to pursue a policy of aggression and tension, rather than reconciliation. This is a grave error. Similar policies pursued by the Greek-Cypriots in the past have brought nothing but tears and suffering to the Greek-Cypriot people and have taken a heavy toll on them. Turkey should not be expected to tolerate the Greek-Cypriot administration to become a source of threat to the Turkish-Cypriots or Turkey. There is no doubt that the greatest responsibility in encouraging, aiding and abetting the Greek-Cypriots in this direction belongs to Greece. The pursuit by Greece, which is a NATO member, of a hostile policy towards Turkey by manipulating the Greek-Cypriots, and its endeavor to threaten Turkey's southern region through the Greek-Cypriot sector, are the product of an extremely dangerous and irresponsible policy.<sup>88</sup>

In the event that the joint Greek-Greek Cypriot front continues its endeavors to alter the balance between Turkey and Greece, in Cyprus or in the region, and to endanger the security of the Turkish Cypriot people, reciprocal military and political measures will continue to be put into effect without hesitation. Within this framework, Turkey strongly supports the views put forward and measures envisaged by the President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, H.E. Mr. Rauf Denktas in the statement he made on 10 January 1997.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Statement by the Turkish Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Tansu Ciller on January 10, 1997. Source: Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [Available on line: [www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/rusmis3.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/rusmis3.htm)].

<sup>89</sup> Joint Declaration by the Presidents of Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Ankara, January 20, 1997. Source: Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs [Available on line: [www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/add/rusmis9.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/add/rusmis9.htm)].

Starting in 1995, the Turkish armed forces stationed on the northern part of the island were significantly upgraded and reinforced,<sup>90</sup> prompting the UN secretary general to report to his bi-annual report on Cyprus in December 1995 that Cyprus is one of the most highly militarized areas in the world.

In addition, every year tensions arise between the two countries during the period of the Greek-Cypriot exercise “Nikiforos-Toxotis.” It results in numerous “mock-dogfights” between Turkish and Greek fighter aircraft and exchange of harsh statements among officials by both sides. Dogfights that create concern even among foreign diplomats and as the U.S. Ambassador to Greece said, “I’m convinced that Greece and Turkey want to avoid conflict, but when you have mock dogfights, you’re going to run a little bit of a risk<sup>91</sup>.” Turkey accuses Greece of “...attempting to upset peace and stability in the eastern Mediterranean and to change the balance between the two countries over Cyprus with the execution of offensive scenarios<sup>92</sup>.” Greece responds that “ Nikiforos-Toxotis constitutes exercise of sovereign rights, is of defensive nature, and the presence of Greek armed forces is the result of an invitation by the legitimate Cypriot government contrary to the presence of the Turkish forces in the occupied territories that is the result of an invitation by an occupation regime in violation of international law<sup>93</sup>.”

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<sup>90</sup> For more information on upgrades and arms procurements from both sides see James Bruce’s article, “*Heightened Tensions over Cyprus*”. Jane’s Intelligence Review, July 1996, pp.306-308.

<sup>91</sup> Statement of Nicholas Burns. U.S. Ambassador to Greece, *Athens News* p.A03, October 31, 1998.

<sup>92</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement No.192 on “Nikiforos-Toxotis” military exercise, October 23, 2000. [Available on line: mfa.gov.tr/grupb/ba/baa 20/October # bm07]

<sup>93</sup> Statement of Greek government’s spokesperson Dimitris Reppas on October 13, 1998. Source: *Macedonian Press Agency*.

#### *d. Summation on the Joint Defense Area Concept*

It should be stressed that with the exception of the Greek Communist Party - which disagree with the new doctrine - the major political parties of Greece support the steps taken in order to strengthen Greece's extended deterrence strategy towards Cyprus. The critique of this policy within the country is twofold: First, by searching for a strategic position equivalent to the one that Turkey has in Cyprus, Greece is shifting the center of gravity of its deterrence policy towards the periphery. Such an outcome can be harmful for the country's own security concerns. Secondly, it can undermine the on-going negotiating processes and endanger the possibility to reach a solution on the Cyprus issue on the international level.<sup>94</sup>

The most important issue in relation to the Joint Defense Area doctrine originates from the question of how much it will increase Greek strategy as a whole. As Liddell Hart said, "Strategy depends for success, first and most, on a sound *calculation and co-ordination of the end and the means*"<sup>95</sup>. Following Hart's perspective, the ability of the Hellenic Armed Forces (mainly the Air Forces') to provide Cyprus with sufficient defensive coverage is right now rather limited due to distance and inability to allocate available forces (without creating a gap in the Aegean). However, since Greece's key objective is deterrence, in other words to increase the cost of an adversary in case he decides to pursue a hostile strategy, and the threat to retaliate in other areas where its forces enjoy relevant advantage, then this attainment must be considered feasible.

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<sup>94</sup> Among them Kostas Zepos, *Ellinotourkika kai Eniaio Amintiko Dogma* (Greek-Turkish Relations and Joint Defense Doctrine), Yearbook of the Institute of International Relations, Sideris pub., Athens, 1996, p.127-128.

<sup>95</sup> B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1968, p.336.

Concluding, the Joint Defense Area doctrine represents an effort to alter the balance in the area and to disengage Cyprus from Turkey's military and strategic superiority. The desired outcome is the just solution of the Cyprus issue, a solution that unfortunately cannot be enforced either from the UN<sup>96</sup> or any other institution (E.U, NATO). Such a task is difficult to achieve and can be accomplished if the necessary weapon systems and support infrastructure initiated seven years ago, continues to grow. Furthermore, its success depends on the will to fight, if necessary, and the acknowledgment by both countries (Greece and Cyprus) that it constitutes a "one way street," and any deviation from it in case of crisis or conflict will constitute a serious blow against their credibility and deterrence ability.

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<sup>96</sup> Resolution 1179 of the U.N. reaffirms that *the status quo in Cyprus is unacceptable* and the Security Council's position that a Cyprus settlement must be based on *a state of Cyprus with a single sovereignty* and international personality and a single citizenship, with its independence and territorial integrity safeguarded, and comprising to politically equal communities as described in the relevant Security Council resolutions, in a bi-communal and bi-zonal federation, and that such a settlement must exclude union in whole or in part with any other country or any form of partition or secession. [Available on line: [www.un.org/Docs/sres/1998/sres1179.htm](http://www.un.org/Docs/sres/1998/sres1179.htm)].

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### **III. GREECE AND TURKEY AT THE BRINK OF WAR**

#### **A. CASES STUDY**

##### **1. The 1996 Imia/Kardak Crisis**

On January 31, 1996, Greece and Turkey came close to war in the Aegean. The immediate object of the confrontation was the Imia (Kardak) group of uninhabited islets. They form part of the Dodecanese island chain that was seized by Italy from the Ottoman Empire in the war of 1911-1912. The islets became part of Greece along with the rest of the Greek-inhabited Dodecanese islands and islets through the Treaty of Peace with Italy signed by the Allied Powers and Italy in Paris on 10 February 1947.

Many argue<sup>97</sup> that the root cause of the crisis in the Aegean is Turkey's decision to attempt to alter, at Greece's expense, the territorial status quo, as well as the status of territorial waters, continental shelf rights and flight jurisdiction of the region. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Turkey had threatened six months earlier, to declare war if Greece extended its territorial waters in the Aegean to the 12-mile limit as stipulated by the Convention on the Law of the Sea.<sup>98</sup> It should be noted that Greece has signed this convention, but Turkey has not.

The crisis began when on December 25, 1995, the Turkish cargo boat *Figen Akat* ran aground on this twin set of barren rocks located 3.65 nm off the Turkish coast, and

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<sup>97</sup> See, Van Coufoudakis, *Greek-Turkish Relations, 1973-1983: The View from Athens*, International security 9, 1985, pp.185-217.

<sup>98</sup> Available on line [[www.gopher.un.org/11/LOS/UNCLOS82](http://www.gopher.un.org/11/LOS/UNCLOS82)].

1.9 nm from the Greek island of Kalolimnos. The Greek navy responded quickly to provide assistance to the ship, which was denied by the Turkish captain, claiming to be in Turkish waters. The captain later accepted Greek help and the *Figen Akat* was towed back to the Turkish port of Gulluk by a Greek tugboat.

Following this incident, on December 29, Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs addressed a Verbal Note to the Embassy of Greece in Ankara, asserting for the first time that Imia constitutes a part of Turkish territory. On January 10, 1996, the Greek Embassy replied by addressing a Verbal Note to the Turkish Ministry rejecting this claim and citing that its sovereign rights are set by the international treaties of 1932 (Lausanne) and 1947 (Paris). The crisis escalated when these diplomatic exchanges were leaked to the media on January 24, 1996. Soon thereafter, the mayor of the neighboring Greek island of Kalymnos had a Greek flag hoisted up on the island. On the 27th, journalists from the Turkish daily newspaper *Hurriyet* arrived by helicopter on the islets and took down the Greek flag, replacing it with a Turkish one, an act that dominated the evening news in both countries.<sup>99</sup>

At this point, there was no way for outside observers to realize that Greece and Turkey were potentially days from war. As Michael Hickok states, "even if NATO had picked up indications or warnings that tensions were increasing, it is unclear what measures it might have taken to defuse the situation using the decision-making

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<sup>99</sup> *Eleytherotypia*, 28/01/96.

architecture available to the alliance. There are limited provisions within NATO policy structures to mitigate inter-alliance disputes involving purely bilateral issues<sup>100</sup>. ”

On the 28th, the Greek naval vessel *Panagopoulos II* restored the Greek flag. In addition, lack of communication between the civilian and military leadership in Athens and Ankara led to a series of poor decisions, accelerating the pace of the crisis to disproportional levels.<sup>101</sup> The Greek and Turkish navies began assembling forces near Imia (Kardak) and a small Greek navy seals unit was stationed on the largest of the islets. On the evening of January 30, while Greek and Turkish naval units faced off<sup>102</sup> around the islets the United States offered its good offices to defuse the crisis. President Clinton and secretary of State Warren Christopher placed calls to the Premiers of both Greece and Turkey that night. Their calls were followed up by Richard Holbrooke (assistant secretary of State for European affairs), and other top American officials, including General Shalikashvili. It appeared that both sides agreed for the purposes of de-escalating the crisis, to withdraw their forces from the area and not raise flags on the islets again.<sup>103</sup> While it seemed that an agreement was reached in principle, Turkey, in the early hours of January 31, landed a small number of Turkish commandos on the unguarded smaller islet

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<sup>100</sup> Michael R. Hickok, *Falling Towards War in the Aegean: A Case Study of the Imia/Kardak Affair*, Air War College: Department of future Conflict Studies, Maxwell AFB, 1998.

<sup>101</sup> For more information on domestic situations before the crisis, see Carol Migdalovitz, *Greece and Turkey: The Rocky Islets Crisis*, CRS Report for Congress, 96-140F, CRS-4.

<sup>102</sup> According to Admiral Lymberis, Chief of Hellenic Armed Forces Joint Chief of Staff during the Imia crisis, in the night between January 30/31 within a few miles around Imia were deployed the following naval units: Hellenic Navy (1 GM frigate, 1 GM destroyer, 3 missile boats, 2 corvettes, and 2 coastal patrol vessels), Turkish Navy (3 GM frigates, 2 missile boats, and 2 coastal patrol vessels). *Poreia se Taragmenes Thalasses* (Navigating through rough seas), Piotita pub. 1999, p.573 (in Greek).

<sup>103</sup> “No troops, no ships, no flags”, *Ibid.*, p.538.

of the Imia (Kardak) complex. When the Greek side detected this action, a decision was made not to attack the Turkish force in order to avoid escalating the crisis. By daylight, the ground forces of both sides withdrew and the navies dispersed.

The Greek public reacted with outrage over the events, Turkey had not only disputed Greek territory, but had also briefly invaded it. The American and European position during the crisis was to avert war and avoid taking sides between the two NATO allies. This neutrality deeply disturbed the Greeks, who felt that they deserved greater solidarity from their allies in the face of Turkey's aggressive acts. Once the details of the confrontation were scrutinized, the Clinton administration advised the two sides to take their dispute to the International Court of Justice while the European Union adopted a resolution favoring Greece's position.<sup>104</sup>

At the aftermath of the crisis, Turkish Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Omer Akbel declared that “[Turkey] said from the beginning that the issue was not merely the ownership of Kardak [Imia] rocks, which Turkey claims as its own under international law. These are hundreds of little islands, islets, and rocks in the Aegean and their status remain unclear, due to the absence of a comprehensive bilateral agreement between the two countries<sup>105</sup>.” In other words, the Turkish side had denied the validity of the 1932

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<sup>104</sup> See, *EU Resolution on the Provocative Actions and Contestation of Sovereign Rights by Turkey Against a Member State of the Union* (Adopted by a vote of 342 for, 21 against, and 11 abstentions). Source Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [Available on line: [www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral/europ.htm](http://www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral/europ.htm)].

<sup>105</sup> See *Turkish Daily News*, 1/2/96. Also for similar statements by Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, *Milliyet* and *Cumhuriyet* 4/2/96.

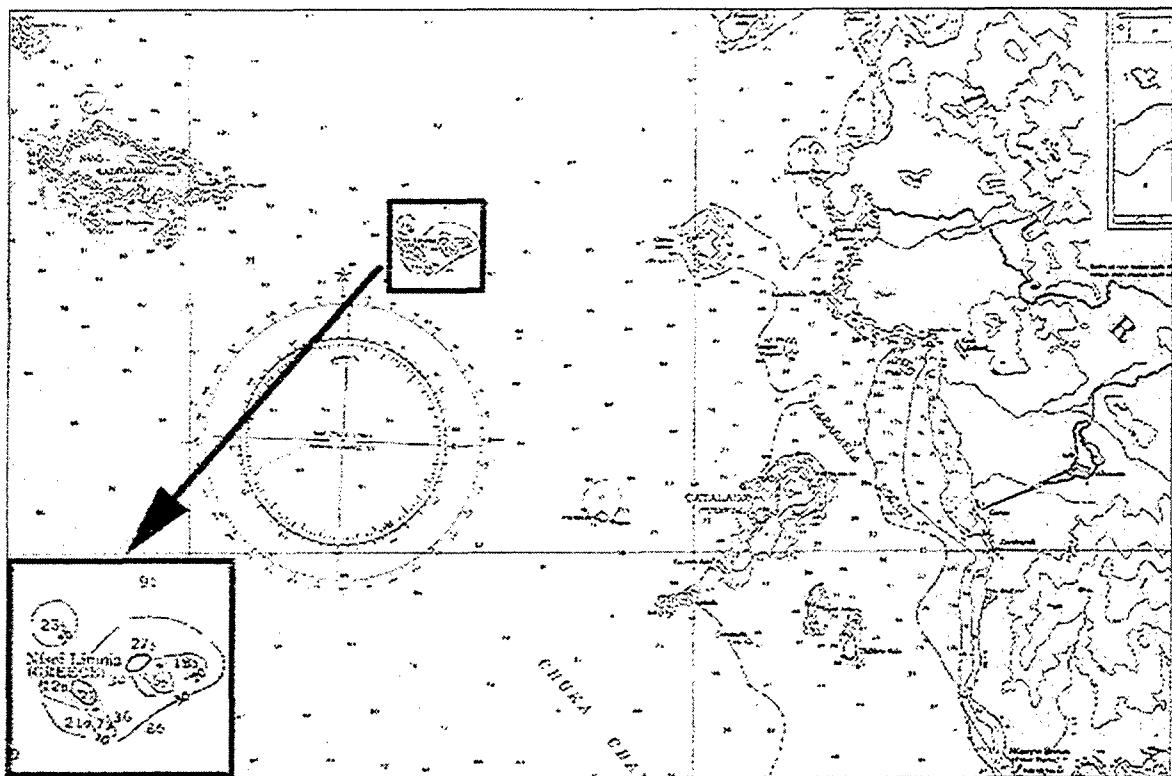
Italo-Turkish protocol,<sup>106</sup> which specified the rocks by name as belonging to Italy and hence devolving to Greece according to the 1947 Paris Treaty between Italy and the Allies.<sup>107</sup> The Imia (Kardak) incident confirmed the Greeks' worst fears about broader Turkish claims that "gray areas" exist with respect to Aegean island sovereignty and exact borders.

At the end, a major international crisis between the two countries on NATO's southeastern flank was narrowly averted. The United States ensured that the situation was restored to the *status quo ante*, a *status quo* that is inherently unstable because the causes of the crisis were never confronted. The U.S. desire for stability in the Aegean motivated the country in this case, but this stability can never be attained unless the fundamental conflict issues between the two countries in the area are addressed.

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<sup>106</sup> Due to a dispute regarding the islets between the island of Castellorizo and the Turkish coast, Italy and Turkey concluded on 4 January 1932 the Convention Between Italy and Turkey for the Delimitation of the Territorial waters Between the Coasts of Anatolia and the Island of Castellorizo. On the same day, through an exchange of letters initiated by Turkey between the Turkish Foreign Minister and the Italian Ambassador to Turkey, it was agreed that the two sides would extend the already established delimitation to cover the whole of the Dodecanese region. A follow-on agreement was signed to this effect on 28 December 1932. It continues the delineation of the border line between the Dodecanese and the Turkish coast of Anatolia using 37 points and refers explicitly to the islets of Imia/Kardak as belonging to the Italian (and therefore, since 1947, to the Greek) side. More precisely point no. 30 reads, in the original French text: "La ligne frontiere [...] passe par les points suivants: [...] 30.- a moitie distance entre Kardak (Rks.) et Kato I. (Anatolie)." The protocol set the mid-point between numerous listed islands and the Anatolian coast as a border, including a midpoint between Kardak (Italy) and Kato (Turkey). Due to its technical nature and undisputed character, this second Italo-Turkish agreement of 1932 was negotiated and agreed upon at a lower level of representatives. For these reasons Greece maintains that it did not need to be ratified and no such requirement was mentioned in the text of the agreement itself. It entered into force and was consistently respected by both parties for the last 64 years. Ankara positions in 1996 was that the possession of small islands, islets, and rocks in the Aegean has not been determined clearly by the agreement since the second protocol was not registered. [The protocol is available on line: [www.hol.gr/imia/turkit.htm](http://www.hol.gr/imia/turkit.htm)].

<sup>107</sup> For an extensive analysis of the Turkish and Greek views on the legal issues concerning the sovereignty over the islets, see the respective web sites of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs. [Available on line for Turkey in [www.mfa.gov.tr](http://www.mfa.gov.tr) and for Greece in [www.mfa.gr](http://www.mfa.gr)].



**Figure 1:** Published by the (U.S.) Defense Mapping Agency, Hydrographic / Topographic Center, Nov. 1990, 3rFigure 2d Edition. The Imia islets are referred to by their alternate (Greek) name "Limnia" and are noted as belonging to Greece. (Source: Hellenic Ministry of National Defense, Borders Sovereignty Stability, the Imia crisis and Turkish violations of international law, ELIAMEP 1996).

## 2. The S-300 Missile Crisis

Tensions in the region escalated once again when on January 5, 1997, Cyprus confirmed the purchase of S-300PMU-1<sup>108</sup> surface to air missile system from Russia.<sup>109</sup> The decision to acquire the system (estimated to be deployed in Autumn of 1998) was part of a larger program to increase the Cypriot defense capabilities. Capabilities that are

<sup>108</sup> See for missile system information, Steven Zaloga, "Grumble: Guardian of the Skies- Part I & II," Jane's Intelligence Review, March 97 (pp.113-118), and April 97 (pp.153-156).

<sup>109</sup> See, CNN World news, "Missile Dispute Threatens Cyprus," 10/1/97. [Available on line: [www.cnn.com/WORLD/9701/10/cyprus/](http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9701/10/cyprus/)].

particularly vulnerable from the air since Cyprus does not have an air force and the large distance from Greek bases limits the Hellenic Air Force to challenge effectively Turkish superiority of the air over the island.

Following this announcement Turkey reacted by threatening to destroy the missiles if the Greek-Cypriots decided to deploy the system on the island.<sup>110</sup> An action that would oblige Greece to come to Cyprus' defense, risking an escalation to a general Greek-Turkish war. The situation was complicated further when Turkey declared that it would attack ships carrying the missile components to the island. This caused the Russian reaction and their direct involvement in the crisis. In the following months, both the United States and major European countries opposed Cyprus decision to acquire the missiles and pressured its government for postponement or cancellation. Various proposals for demilitarization of the island in exchange for the abandonment of the missiles acquisition (the U.S also favored a moratorium for a no-fly zone over Cyprus as the first step towards demilitarization) were rejected from the Turkish side.<sup>111</sup> The missile issue had become a war of nerves, in which a decision by either side to call the other side's "bluff" might have risked war.

After a two-year commitment<sup>112</sup> by Cyprus, supported by Greece, to deploy the Russian S-300 surface to air missiles on Cypriot soil within 1998, Athens and Lefkosia

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<sup>110</sup> See, *Washington Times*, 11/1/97.

<sup>111</sup> See, *Athens News*, 11/7/98.

<sup>112</sup> For an extensive chronological account of the events over the two years (1997-1998), see the web site of Monterey Institute of International studies (Center for Nonproliferation studies). [Available on line: <http://cns.miis.edu/research/cyprus/chr97.htm>].

decided to redirect the missile deployment to the Greek island of Crete.<sup>113</sup> The principal reason that Cyprus and Greece withdrew from their position on the missiles issue was that their deployment threatened their European policy for Cyprus' accession to the union. In addition, the United States as well as the large powers of the EU (contrary to the unions' more pro-Greek position in Imia/Kardak case) opposed the S-300 missile deployment as "destabilizing", and as providing a highly undesirable opening for Russia's involvement in the Cyprus problem. Given the determination of Athens and Lefkosa to push for Cypriot inclusion in the first forthcoming round of EU expansion, Ankara was able to call their "bluff" on the missile issue to cause a major military incident that would have carried a high risk of generalized warfare. Wavering between a conflict - an outcome that would have derailed Cyprus progress towards EU accession - and the weakening of their extended deterrence credibility, the two countries tilted towards the second option by deploying the missiles to Crete.

## B. THE DYNAMICS OF GREEK-TURKISH INTERACTION

Both Greece and Turkey have a strong interest in the prevention of an armed conflict between them, since warfare would halt or even reverse the current Greek and Turkish economic modernization efforts. Although Greece met the macroeconomic convergence criteria that permit its participation in the EU's monetary Union<sup>114</sup> on

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<sup>113</sup> See, "Cyprus Decides Against Missiles," BBC News 11/12/99. [Available on line: [www.news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid\\_244000/244506.stm](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_244000/244506.stm)].

<sup>114</sup> The criteria for participation in the European monetary union, which were achieved on January 1, 2001, were a) budget deficit no more than 3% of GDP, b) inflation and nominal interests rates not higher than 1.5% from the E.U average, and c) public debt moving towards or less than 60% of GDP.

January 1, 2001, further restructuring of the economy and the reduction of unemployment (9.9 percent) remain its major challenges. Turkey's modernization leap of the 1980s and its determination to continue on this path towards becoming one of the world's major emerging markets was abruptly stopped when a financial crisis broke out at the end of February 2001, forcing Ankara to float the currency and the Turkish Lira lost over forty percent of its value against the dollar.<sup>115</sup> Thus, both countries for different reasons face challenges that threaten or undermine their modernization efforts. The question is whether the dynamics of the strategic interaction between Greece and Turkey are sufficiently strong in an escalatory direction to lead them towards conflict, in spite of the opposite dynamic of the importance of their modernization efforts.

The most substantial dynamic factor in Greek-Turkish relations is the steady change in the bilateral strategic balance in favor of Turkey. In the 1980s, a review<sup>116</sup> of the Aegean military balance showed that it appeared fairly stable. Although Turkey's ground balance favored a sustained campaign and the two navies were equal, at the airpower level the balance was favoring Greece, which had a qualitative advantage in the air. During this period the Turkish challenges declined and in 1987, Greece's quick mobilization and the declaration of a *casus belli* in case Turkey proceeded with the survey of the disputed continental shelf, forced Turkey to cancel this action.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> For more information on Turkey's financial crisis see "Turkish Inflation Surprise," BBC News 3/4/2001. [Available on line: [www.news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/business/newsid\\_1257000/1257665.stm](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/business/newsid_1257000/1257665.stm)].

<sup>116</sup> See, U.S Senate (Hans Binnendijk and Alfred Friendly), *Turkey, Greece and NATO: The Strained Alliance*, Washington: Committee on Foreign Relations, 1980, p.20.

<sup>117</sup> In March 1987, the oil exploration vessel Sismik was ordered from Turkey's National security council to sail under naval escort in the Aegean and start oil exploitations. Greece considered this action a violation of its territorial rights and a *casus belli* in case Turkey proceeded with its intentions (the map that the

However, Turkish military expenditures and armament acquisitions have exceeded Greece's since the mid-1980s resulting in a growing Turkish military superiority over Greece. The ratio in total expenditures (absolute numbers) was reduced from 1.07 in 1985 to 0.61 in 1995, and the ratio in armaments expenditures was reduced in the particular years from 1.94 to 0.32.<sup>118</sup> It must be stressed, that Turkish defense acquisitions are motivated in part by factors irrelevant to Greek-Turkish relations and aimed at deterring the Syrian threat and at fighting the Kurdish insurrection in southeast Turkey. In contrast, Greek military spending is primarily driven by the growth of Turkish armaments and the need to limit Turkish military superiority with regard to Greece.

Nevertheless, the result is a regional arms race that has a significant impact on their economies. Indicative of the burden that military expenditures have imposed over the economies is the recent developments. Turkey - following its recent financial crisis - for the first time postponed thirty-two of its major defense projects.<sup>119</sup> This announcement comes several days after Greece's decision to postpone the acquirement of

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research vessel was supposed to explore showed that its route lied 95 percent within the Greek continental shelf). By declaring a general mobilization and issuing orders to sink the Turkish ship, the Greek government had decided to take the risk of a unilateral escalation. The combination of a relative military balance and the political will in this case forced Turkey to take a step backwards. The vessel remained during its survey within Turkish territorial waters. For more information of the 1987 crisis see, Yiannis Kapsis, *Oi treis Meres tou Marti* (The Three Days of March), Nea Synora, Athens, 1990 (in Greek).

<sup>118</sup> See Stavros V., *Sigritiki Analisi ton Stratiotikon Dapanon Ellados-Tourkias*, (An analytical comparison of Greek-Turkish military expenditures), Yearbook of the Institute of International Relations, Sideris pub., Athens, 1997, p.74 (in Greek). In addition, *Defense Expenditures of NATO Countries 1975-1995*, NATO Review, January 1996, p.33.

<sup>119</sup> Turkey announced a \$US 19.5 billion reduction in its defense spending because of its financial crisis. See "Vima tis Kiriakis," 14/4/2001.

sixty Eurofighter fighter aircraft<sup>120</sup> after the year 2004 in an effort to reduce its public deficit.

The overall military advantage of Turkey over Greece in the bilateral strategic balance is enlarged by two geostrategic factors:

- Cyprus strategic vulnerability to Turkey.
- Turkey's strategic advantage regarding the Aegean islands.

As previously indicated, the distance from Greece to Cyprus is so large as to place the island only barely within the operational range of the Hellenic Air Force. The Turkish mainland, in contrast, is only forty miles away from Cyprus. This factor was augmented since 1974 with the presence in northern Cyprus of a Turkish army.<sup>121</sup> Turkey's dominant position in Cyprus is relevant not only to the Cyprus problem, but also to the Greek-Turkish relations, since it adds a powerful instrument of pressure in Greece regarding the Greek-Turkish disputes in the Aegean. Turkey can implicitly threaten to attack the remaining territories under the control of the Republic of Cyprus in the event that Greece moves against Turkish interests in the Aegean. Mr. Sukru Elekdag, former undersecretary of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former Ambassador in the United States said:

Greeks are cognizant of the fact that in the event that they escalate the crisis in the Aegean to a hot conflict, this will force Turkey to take military measures in Cyprus. Greece is aware of its vulnerability in Cyprus. This assessment in turn leads Greece to be cautious in the Aegean. In other words, the presence of Turkish troops in Cyprus is an additional and effective

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<sup>120</sup> See "Greece Postpones Buying 60 Eurofighter Warplanes," Athens News 30/3/2001, p. A09.

<sup>121</sup> The Turkish army in Cyprus has an estimated strength of about 30,000 and in recent years comprised the 11<sup>th</sup> Army Corps, made up of the 28<sup>th</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry divisions, in addition to other elements and units. See "Cyprus: Divisions are Deep 25 Years On", Jane's Intelligence Review, December 1999, p.14.

deterrent compelling Greece to think twice concerning her initiatives in the Aegean.<sup>122</sup>

From a strategic perspective the geography of the Aegean also favors the Turkish side. Over twenty significant Greek islands are located close to the Turkish mainland, thus making them vulnerable to an attack in case of a Greek-Turkish confrontation. It would be difficult for Greek strategy to aim at a strong defense of all these islands, since this would mean a dispersal of Greek forces (the flexible response doctrine aims to alleviate this problem), whereas the Turkish side would be able to concentrate its forces on its chosen target. On the other side, Turkish geography does not offer similar targets for a potential Greek counter-offensive. The consequence of this strategic asymmetry makes it more likely for Turkey, in case of a Greek-Turkish conflict, to capture territory and enter the peace negotiations with a critical bargaining advantage.

The growing Turkish superiority in the Greek-Turkish military balance, combined with the rapid development of the Turkish defense industry<sup>123</sup> and the acute demographic problem<sup>124</sup> of Greece explains to a certain extent the boldness and confidence on

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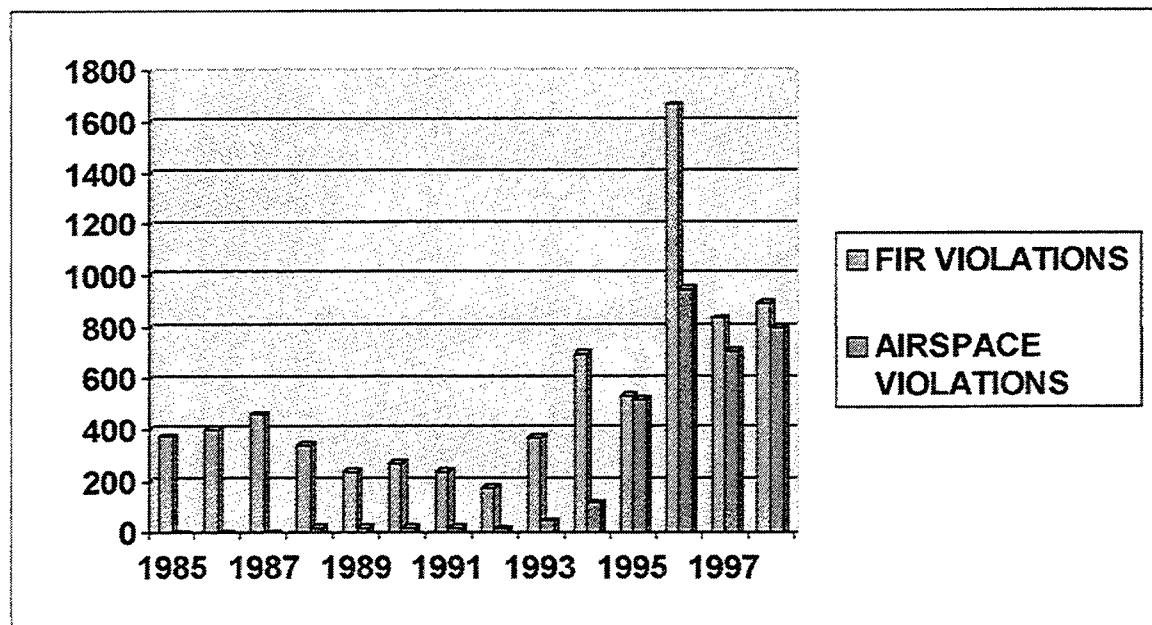
<sup>122</sup> Quoted from Sukru Elekdag, *2 ½ War Strategy*, Perceptions, Journal of International Affairs, March-May 1996, Vol.I, No.4.

<sup>123</sup> The roots of Turkish modernization program go back to the reorganization of the defense industry ordered by Act No. 3238 in November 1985. The act was designed to help Turkey respond better to the rapid technological changes in the defense industry and provide its armed forces with modern defense equipment. For more detailed analysis see, Michael Hickok, *The Gap Between Turkish Strategy and Military Modernization*, Parameters, Summer 2000, pp.105-119.

<sup>124</sup> The Hellenic Armed Forces have 145,000 military personnel. It is worth noting that because of the demographic problem Greece's output of each conscript class is steadily reduced. It is calculated that the 2011 class (those born in 1990) will provide 57.6% of the 1955 class (those born in 1934). Source: Ministry of National Defense, *White Paper on the Hellenic Armed Forces*, Athens 2000, pp.114-115.

Turkey's military manpower is 609,000 (est. 1999) with a population growth rate of 1.27% (est.2000) in comparison to Greece's population growth rate of 0.21%. Source: *CIA World Factbook* [Available on line: [www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/tu.html](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/tu.html)].

Turkey's behalf. The questioning of territorial boundaries in relation to uninhabited islets (The 1996 Imia/Kardak case) pursued by acts of brinkmanship, such as the landing of commandos, are actions that are usually displayed by the side that enjoys superiority and thus has less to fear from escalation. In addition, the steady growth of airspace violations (especially over national airspace-see Table.1) over the last decade in comparison with the previous years is another example of Turkish aims to use their military advantage in order to impose their will in the Greek-Turkish dispute.



**Table 1:** Athens FIR and Greek National Airspace violations, 1985-1998 (Source: Kathimerini, 12/7/96 and 1/11/98, from data given to the press by the Hellenic Ministry of Defense).

Regarding Greece, strategic weakness has by no means produced a willingness to retreat from what are perceived as vital national interests in the Aegean and Cyprus. As a result, Greece has attempted to counter the growing Turkish military advantage in a number of ways, some of which carry the risk of conflict escalation as we have seen with the planned deployment of the Russian S-300 missile system in Cyprus.

In conclusion, the growing bilateral strategic superiority of Turkey vis-à-vis Greece, which is augmented by its dominance in Cyprus, and Greece's efforts to alleviate and counter the consequences of its inferior strategic position, threaten to result in an unplanned conflict escalation towards warfare. Neither Greece nor Turkey seems likely to put at risk their economic modernization efforts by deliberate steps towards an armed conflict. However, their strategic postures cannot exclude the possibility of an unintended escalation with disastrous consequences for both. Looking at the long run, Greece will be able to defend its interests only if it once more achieves a relative strategic balance with Turkey.

## IV. TURKEY'S POLICY AND THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL FACTORS IN THE GREEK-TURKISH INTERACTION

### A. TURKEY'S POST COLD WAR ROLE AND SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

Much has been written about Turkey's new security environment and the changes that emerged from the disintegration of the Soviet Union that has created controversy even among scholars. On the one hand, we have those who believe that the end of the cold war has reduced the threats to Turkey's national security and territorial integrity in such a way that in the post-cold war era, Turkey's security environment was the safest it had been in the country's seventy-five-year history.<sup>125</sup> On the other hand, we have those who consider Turkey as one of the few states that emerged from the cold war without a sense of enhanced security.<sup>126</sup>

As it is usual in these cases, the truth lies in between. The Russians, whom Turks feared for more than three hundred years, are no longer even Turkey's neighbors, and the Russian Federation has become Turkey's fourth largest trading partner.<sup>127</sup> Turkey's affairs with Azerbaijan are strong because the two countries share the same ethnic and linguistic ties, and economic relations with Georgia are significant. The most difficult

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<sup>125</sup> See for more information, Yasemin Celik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, Praeger publishers, 1999.

<sup>126</sup> See Malik Mufti, *Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy*, Middle East Journal, No.58, Winter 1998, p.33.

<sup>127</sup> For economic trade figures, see Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey's New Eastern Orientation*, in Turkey's New Geopolitics, ed. by G. Fuller and I. Lesser, Westview press, 1993, p.89.

relations in the region were with Armenia.<sup>128</sup> The reason was Turkey's ban on the transportation through its territory of humanitarian and other goods for Armenia during the country's conflict with Azerbaijan. In spite of such sporadic problems in Ankara's relations with the former Soviet republics, Turkey's northeastern border did not endanger its security and integrity in the same way that a consistently hostile superpower did.

A bigger threat was derived from Turkey's traditionally unfriendly neighbors in the southeast: Iran, Iraq, and Syria. The danger from this area was also somewhat reduced in the post-cold war period, because Iraq (its military apparatus was heavily damaged during the Gulf war) and Syria were facing troubled economies and internal problems and both had lost a substantial amount of equipment received from the Soviet Union. Concerning Iran, although they competed as to which could export its political and cultural system as a model for the former Soviet republics in Central Asia, as Celik stresses "they were not particularly hostile toward each other in their rivalry<sup>129</sup>."

Despite these improvements in Turkey's security environment, it is important to note that not all threats to security have been lifted in the post-cold war era. Iran and Syria continued to interfere in Turkey by supporting through financial contributions and military training Islamic and Kurdish guerrillas. In addition, Syria vociferously demanded a greater share of the Euphrates waters.<sup>130</sup> Despite the decreased threats to Turkey's security from abroad, there was a significant internal threat. Since 1984, the Kurdish

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<sup>128</sup> The hostility with Armenia stemmed from the fact that the Armenians held Ankara responsible for the battles in 1915 during which the Ottoman Army carried out genocide on the Armenian population in eastern Turkey.

<sup>129</sup> Yasemin Celik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, Praeger publishers, 1999, p.xvi.

<sup>130</sup> See "The Oldest Threat: Water in the Middle East," Jane's Intelligence Review, 1/2/98.

Workers Party (PKK) had been waging a guerrilla war against the government that claimed more than ten thousand lives in the 1993-1995 period alone.<sup>131</sup> Finally, a number of near-collisions with its NATO partner Greece have exposed the fragility of the Aegean region's stability, and their interaction over Cyprus continues to present the potential for an international crisis.

As late as 1997, Turkish military briefers ranked Russia, Greece, Iraq, Iran, and Syria as the top threats to their security based on their perceived claims on Turkish territory and their ability to project conventional forces.<sup>132</sup> As regards Greece, Evin states that the dispute over the Aegean and Greece's attitude does not directly threaten Turkey's national security.<sup>133</sup> However, the Former Deputy undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry and Ambassador to Washington, Sukru Elekdag, gave a more specific policy spin to these concerns when he argued that:

There are valid reasons for Turkey's regarding other neighbors with skepticism and [others] as a source of threat. Two countries among these neighbors, namely Greece and Syria, who have claims on Turkey's vital interests, constitute an immediate threat for Turkey.

All these add up to the necessity of Turkey effecting its defense planning on "two-and-a-half campaigns," i.e., conducting two full scale operations simultaneously along the Aegean and southern fronts while at the same time

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<sup>131</sup> Yasemin Celik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, Praeger publishers, 1999, p.xvii.

<sup>132</sup> See Malik Mufti, *Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy*, Middle East Journal, No.58, Winter 1998, pp.34-40. Although the author suggests that policymakers in Ankara were attempting by this time to distinguish between outright enemies and states with competing interests, he still argues that the threats stemmed from the potential loss of Turkish territory or to the isolation of Turkey by an alliance of neighboring states that could surround it with a "ring of evil."

<sup>133</sup> Ahmet Evin, *Modern Turkey: Continuity and Change*, Oplanden, Germany: Leske and Budrich, 1984.

being prepared for a half war that might be instigated from within the country.<sup>134</sup>

Furthermore, Turkey's radical strategic position transformation at the end of the cold war has unleashed a set of new opportunities as well as potential new problems in the Balkans, Caucasus, Central Asia, and Middle East. Together with the country's aspirations to become a global and regional power, Ankara's geostrategic reach is no longer limited to its role in NATO's southern region but it also pursues a leading role in Eurasia. Brzezinski has described Turkey as a "geopolitical pivot" a state "whose importance is not derived from its power and motivation but rather from its sensitive location<sup>135</sup>." Turkish strategic importance is confined not only by its geographic location but also from its military abilities. It has the second largest armed forces in NATO and enjoys a significant advantage over its neighbors.<sup>136</sup>

Turkey's objectives to play a new role in the international environment are enhanced by the fact that it has adopted a broader range of options in its foreign and security policy.<sup>137</sup> For generations of Turks, Turkish's position as a European country,

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<sup>134</sup> Quoted from Sukru Elekdag, 2': *War Strategy*, Perceptions, Journal of International Affairs, March-May 1996, Vol.I, No.4.

<sup>135</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Policy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic books, New York, 1997, p.41. The author also stresses that Turkey's importance stems from its ability to stabilize the Black Sea region and the Balkans; its control of access to the Mediterranean sea; its balancing role against Russia in the Caucasus; its model as an alternative to fundamentalism; and its role as the southern anchor of NATO.

<sup>136</sup> Chief of Turkish General Staff, Gen. Kivrikoglu told reporters in 1998 that in addition to deterrence and collective security Turkey needed to develop operational capabilities for 'forward engagement' and 'forward defense'. Quoted from Michael Hickok article, "The Gap Between Turkish Strategy and Military Modernization," Parameters, Summer 2000, pp.105-119.

<sup>137</sup> For more on Turkey's new strategic options see Ian Lesser, *Turkish Strategic Options*, RAND/RP-795, 1999, pp.85-88.

free from its historic baggage in the Ottoman east has been the keystone of the Republic's identity. Secularist leaders, especially among the military, had dismissed attempts to increase Turkey's role in the Muslim east as unacceptable moves by Islamic reactionaries to undermine Ataturk's western legacy. Yet, official military documents now talk of Turkey as a "country of Eurasia" obligated to "retain and enhance the ties with both east and west<sup>138</sup>." This constitutes a significant watershed in seventy years traditional Turkish strategic thinking and as Ian Lesser says, "Turkey has been profoundly affected by changes on the post-cold war international scene. These changes have emphasized the country's geopolitical importance, but have also sharpened long-standing questions concerning Turkey's identity and role<sup>139</sup>."

Turkey's massive devaluation in February 2001 obviously has profound strategic implications for its role in Europe. This devaluation critically affects Ankara's efforts to join the EU and highlights the need for major structural domestic reforms. In addition, it also displays the many and severe structural barriers in Turkey's ambition to play a major strategic role in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

## B. EXTERNAL FACTORS

The Greek-Turkish confrontation does not take place in a vacuum. The policies of the United States, the EU, and NATO, must be taken into consideration, to the extent that they affect the Greek-Turkish strategic interaction. Both Greece and Turkey are to a certain degree dependent on the West, strategically, politically, and economically.

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<sup>138</sup> Turkish Ministry of National Defense, *White Paper-Defense 1998*, Ankara, p.5.

<sup>139</sup> Quoted from Ian Lesser, *Turkish Strategic Options*, RAND/RP-795, 1999, p. 79.

Therefore, diplomacy and legitimacy, concerning the West, necessarily have a large impact on both countries' policies. Moreover, an examination of the Balkan factor is considered critical since the Greek-Turkish interaction over the former communist states creates another friction area.

### **1. The United States**

The United States, as we have seen, became closely associated with Greece and Turkey under the Truman Doctrine in 1947, more than two years before the creation of NATO. Its role in the area as Stearns writes, "Although has not been exactly imperial, it has certainly been hegemonic." The U.S. Sixth Fleet was introduced into the eastern Mediterranean in 1947, mainly "to demonstrate military support for Greece and Turkey, in whose security the United States had declared a special interest through the Truman Doctrine<sup>140</sup>." The U.S. established military bases in Greece and Turkey and in recognition of its obligations for common security, extended generous military and economic assistance to both.

However, 1974 proved to be a year of extraordinary change and turbulence between Greece and Turkey over the Cyprus events as well as a turning point for U.S. relations with its two NATO allies. The U.S. failure to act and prevent this brief but costly war due to its own internal (Watergate investigation) and external problems (Vietnam war) caused considerable disarray in U.S. affairs with both countries. As a result, in the immediate aftermath of 1974, the United States was not a credible outside

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<sup>140</sup> Quoted from Monteagle Stearns, *Entangled Allies: U.S Policy toward Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus*, Council on Foreign Relations Press, New York 1992, p.2.

mediator, because of suspicions on the Greek side that Washington went along or even encouraged Turkey's actions on Cyprus.<sup>141</sup> In addition, the embargo on arms shipments imposed on Turkey by Congress in February 1975 - lifted in August 1978 - was an awakening that helmed Turkey's commitment to partnership with the United States and undermined their relationship. U.S. relations with both countries suffered and a period of retrenchment from the region set in. As Helen Laipson writes, "Policy-makers were reluctant to pursue activist or high-profile initiatives both because of continued hostility to the United States in each country, and because of the lack of domestic consensus as to what policies would be desirable<sup>142</sup>."

The main characteristic of U.S. policy in the late 70s was a struggle between two competing principles. The first one, driven by Congress and motivated by domestic ethnic interests, favored Greece. In Washington, the influential Greek-American lobby persuaded the Congress to adopt a more pro-Greek stance. The result was the 7:10 ratio of military aid to the two countries<sup>143</sup>. Although was designed also to ensure that the

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<sup>141</sup> "Many Greeks remain convinced that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger encouraged the Greek dictatorship in Athens to pursue the coup against the sometimes left-leaning President of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios, although the Americans-in particular Under Secretary of State Joseph Sisco in his last-ditch visit to the area-gave clear warnings to Athens that the Turks would invade if the Greeks persisted." Quoted from M. James Wilkinson, *Moving Beyond Conflict Prevention to Reconciliation*, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Jun 1999, p.9.

<sup>142</sup> Quoted from Helen Laipson, *U.S Policy towards Greece and Turkey since 1974*, on the Greek-Turkish conflict in the 1990's, edited by Dimitri Constas, St. Martin Press, New York, 1991.

<sup>143</sup> The 7:10 ratio is not an obligation embodied in U.S. law, and thus, since 1978, "the executive branch has made a point of submitting aid requests that diverge from 7:10, and Congress has just as regularly restored the total by reducing the Turkish total and/or adding to the Greek." This has proved to be the case every year since the embargo was lifted until 1992 when Congress, influenced by Turkey's key contributions to military victory in the Gulf War, set temporarily aside the 7:10 ratio. See for more information Constantinos Arvanitopoulos, "The Politics of U.S. Aid to Greece and Turkey," Institute of International Relations. Also Helen Laipson, "Greece and Turkey: The Seven-ten Ratio in Military Aid," CRS Report for Congress, 90-29F, December 89.

balance of military strength between Greece and Turkey was preserved, it is considered as the political trade-off made in the Carter era to achieve the lifting of the embargo. The second policy, driven by the executive branch and motivated by strategic interests, favored Turkey. Resisting Soviet expansionism required good relations with a key NATO member such as Turkey.

During the 80s and early 90s, U.S. policy in relation to the Greek-Turkish interaction never achieved high attention. The two countries were viewed as distinct, with separate needs and separate bilateral relationships, avoiding in this way a direct confrontation over the core issues of their dispute. Greek-Turkish problems were considered manageable and there was little progress to place the eastern Mediterranean higher on the regional conflict agenda.

During the Reagan era, and to a lesser extent during the Bush administration, U.S. interests tilted towards Turkey. The reasons were twofold: the shared strategic and economic philosophies with the Turkish leaders of that period, in contrast to the disagreeable and strained relations with the Greek Prime Minister Papandreu. Secondly, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Gulf war revived Turkey's strategic importance in the region and made indispensable the U.S. military installations in the country.<sup>144</sup>

The 1996 Imia (Kardak) incident, demonstrated that the U.S. could mediate agreements that the two sides cannot achieve directly themselves. Moreover, the

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<sup>144</sup> For an extensive analysis on the U.S. policy under various administrations see, Helen Laipson, *U.S Policy towards Greece and Turkey since 1974*, on the Greek-Turkish conflict in the 1990's, edited by Dimitri Constas, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1991. Also Ian Lesser, *Mediterranean Security: New Perspectives and Implications for U.S Policy*. RAND, R-4178-F, 1992.

Americans present the only credible source with the ability to intervene militarily in the region. However, the U.S. neutrality in the crisis was perceived in Greece as favoritism (over an issue that after all was questioning long-established territorial rights) toward Turkey<sup>145</sup> and prevented the United States from engaging immediately after.

Their desire to be a force of positive change persevered and reached fruition with the Madrid Declaration in July 1997. At the NATO summit in Madrid, U.S. secretary of State Madeleine Albright invited the Greek Foreign Minister Pangalos and his Turkish counterpart Ismail Cem to agree on six principles to govern bilateral relations. Prime Minister Simitis and President Demirel then endorsed the principles, which provided for:

- Mutual commitment to peace, security, and the continuing development of good neighborly relations.
- Respect for each other's sovereignty.
- Respect for the principles of international law and international agreements
- Respect for each other's legitimate vital interests and concerns in the Aegean.
- A commitment to refrain from unilateral acts on the basis of mutual respect and the willingness to avoid conflicts arising from misunderstanding
- A commitment to settle disputes by peaceful means based on mutual consent and without use or threat of force.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> On February 1, 1996, a State Department spokesman said that there might be other islands or islets on which the United States takes no position on sovereignty and promised to produce a list of them. Several days later the spokesman retracted its statement, saying there was no list, while expressing concern that the U.S. was "being labeled as part of the problem rather than part of the solution." Quoted from Carol Migdalovitz, *Greece and Turkey: The Rocky Islets Crisis*, CRS Report to Congress, 96-140F, March 1996, CRS-5.

<sup>146</sup> See Carol Migdalovitz, *Greece and Turkey: Aegean Issues-Background and Recent Developments*, CRS Report for Congress, August 1997, CRS-7.

This development was considered at the time as a potential significant advance and a first step towards a confidence-building process. However, there was no follow-up, and by the end of the year both countries start exchanging again rhetorical blows over the S-300 missile issue.

The United States wants stability in the Eastern Mediterranean and the strategic importance of Greece and Turkey is unquestioned.<sup>147</sup> After the Imia (Kardak) crisis, the U.S. sought to become more active in dispute resolution. Although U.S. policy-makers have made efforts to reconcile the two sides in recent years, important bilateral interests inhibit Washington from offending each side and taking actions necessary to improve the situation. Thus, these policies never achieved the needed resilience and receptivity, and result in criticism and all around dissatisfaction. Overall, the American strategy has succeeded in preventing serious outbreaks of violence, but has failed to advance the longer-term prospects for peace.

## **2. The European Union**

The EU constituted the forum in which Greece enjoyed her most significant advantage over Turkey. As an EU member, could veto any steps in the relations between Turkey and the union. Turkey on the other hand viewed Greece's stance as a barrier to its

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<sup>147</sup> “The main objectives of U.S. policy in the region are: To secure access to middle eastern oil and the reserves of the Caspian, unimpeded rights of navigation for both the U.S. sixth fleet and commercial shipping, implementation of the Dayton accords in Bosnia, support of the peacekeeping and reconstruction effort in Kosovo, containment of Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and elimination of his capacity to produce WMD, and promoting and sustaining the Arab-Israel peace process.” Quoted from Monteagle Stearns, *Greece and Turkey: Clash of Civilizations*, American Diplomacy, Spring 2000.

own European orientations and a method to gain political support in their bilateral dispute through the exploitation of its monopoly in the EU.<sup>148</sup> On February 15, 1996, after the Imia (Kardak) crisis the European Parliament adopted a resolution that among others stressed that it was "gravely concerned by the dangerous violation by Turkey of sovereign rights of Greece, a Member State of the European Union and by the build-up of military tension in the Aegean" and that "Greece's borders were also part of the external borders of the European Union<sup>149</sup>."

It must be stressed though, that Greece was not the only EU factor blocking Turkish accession.<sup>150</sup> The Luxemburg summit of mid-December 1997, in which the EU heads of government refused to include Turkey in the list of prospective EU members, revealed that other EU countries consider Turkey not eligible in the near future on account of its domestic conditions (citing also the country's poor human rights record and dispute with Greece). The economic and practical bars to Turkish integration in Europe still existed, and had been reinforced by a deepening of Europe's strategic and above all, cultural reservations. At the conference's sidelines, Chancellor Kohl indicated that a Muslim nation with a population of over 60 million cannot in the near future become a

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<sup>148</sup> For further analysis see, Heinz Kramer's, *Turkey's Relations with Greece: Motives and Interests*, in *The Greek-Turkish conflict in the 1990's*, edited by Dimitri Constas, St. Martin Press, New York, 1991.

<sup>149</sup> *EU Resolution on the Provocative Actions and Contestation of Sovereign Rights by Turkey against a Member State of the Union*. Source Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [Available on line: [www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral/europ.htm](http://www.mfa.gr/foreign/bilateral/europ.htm)].

<sup>150</sup> In March 1997, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel declared that "it [was] clear that Turkey will not become a member of the European Union in the foreseeable future." See Stephen Kinzer, "Europeans Shut the Door on Turkey's Membership in the Union," *New York Times*, 27/3/97, p. A13.

full member of the EU with unrestricted immigration rights.<sup>151</sup> Turkey retaliated by cutting off political dialogue with the block and the Turkish Prime Minister Yilmaz accused EU of building “a new cultural Berlin wall<sup>152</sup>.”

Greece had been successful in promoting the accession of Cyprus to the EU, which is likely to take place with the first wave of EU enlargement in Central and Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, Turkey’s threat to annex northern Cyprus<sup>153</sup> in case of the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the EU before its own accession is a factor that could complicate the Cyprus problem enormously unless the problem is resolved prior to the entry of the island-republic in EU. In a statement on March 16, 1996, EU’s external affairs commissioner Hans Van Der Broek insisted that “the division of Cyprus would not be an obstacle to the island’s future membership and the EU could not indefinitely ignore the aspirations of the majority of the population to be an EU member<sup>154</sup>. ”

The Helsinki Summit in December 1999 and the invitation of Turkey as a candidate member in the EU changed dramatically the bad climate that was created after

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<sup>151</sup> See “*Turkey Responds Angry to EU Exclusion,*” Wall-Street Journal-Europe, 15/12/97.

<sup>152</sup> Lee Hockstader and Kelly Couturier “*Ankara Ready to Sever European Ties,*” Washington Post, 15/12/1997, p. A22.

<sup>153</sup> “The Turkish side will consider the start of accession negotiations between the Greek Cypriot administration and the EU, based on the unilateral application of the Greek Cypriot side for full membership in contravention of international law, as the complete abolition of the framework and parameters for a solution which have emerged during the negotiating process in Cyprus. Each and every unilateral step to be taken by the Greek Cypriot Administration towards the EU membership will accelerate the integration process between Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.” Quoted from the Joint Declaration by the Presidents of Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Ankara, January 20, 1997. Source: Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs [Available on line: [www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/add/rusmis9.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/add/rusmis9.htm)].

<sup>154</sup> Tozun Bahchelli, Theodore Couloumbis and Patricia Carley, *Greek-Turkish relations and U.S Foreign Policy*, Peaceworks No.17, August 97, p.22.

the Luxembourg summit between Turkey and the EU.<sup>155</sup> A major contribution towards this direction was Greece's decision not to veto<sup>156</sup> Turkey's candidacy based on the latter's choice to accept the conditions<sup>157</sup> required by the union. Conditions that satisfied Greece's considerations and prompted the Turkish Prime Minister Ecevit to say that it was "a great success for Turkey to be accepted but there might be details that are hard for us to digest<sup>158</sup>." This effort by the two countries to work together in European affairs was further enhanced a year later, when Greece offered to assist Turkey in its accession process. On April 6, 2001, the Greek minister of foreign affairs Georgios Papandreou and his Turkish counterpart Ismail Cem made the following joint declaration:

After the Helsinki European Council where Turkey's candidacy was recognized, Greece and Turkey initiated cooperation in the framework of the EU, upon the proposal extended by Greece. The two Parties considered such cooperation as a useful instrument for speeding up Turkey's accession process to the EU as well as for improving the state of relations between the two countries.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> For a detailed analysis on Turkish views after the Luxembourg and Helsinki summits see, Attila Eralp's article, "*Turkey in the Enlargement Process: From Luxembourg to Helsinki*", Journal of International Affairs, June-August 2000, Vol. V, No.2.

<sup>156</sup> See "*Greece Gives Turkey EU Green Light*," Athens News 11/12/99, p. A01. Another reason was the amazing rapprochement period that had followed in the relations between the two countries after the summer earthquakes.

<sup>157</sup> "The European Council stresses the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the UN Charter and urges candidate states to make every effort to resolve outstanding border disputes and other related issues. Failing this, they should within a reasonable time bring any pending dispute to the International Court of Justice. The European Council will review the situation relating to such disputes, in particular concerning the repercussions on the accession process, at the latest by the end of 2004." Athens News 11/12/99, p. A01.

<sup>158</sup> See "*Turkey Accepts EU Conditions*," BBC News 11/12/99. [Available on line: [www.news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid\\_558000/558124.stm](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_558000/558124.stm)].

<sup>159</sup> Joint Declaration on Turkey-Greece cooperation on EU matters, April 6, 2001. Source: Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [Available on line: [www.mfa.gr/press/brief1.htm](http://www.mfa.gr/press/brief1.htm)].

Turkey is still far from becoming a full member to the EU or even beginning formal negotiations to become one. However, as long as the Turkish elite seeks to anchor Turkey firmly in the West by becoming an EU country, it represents a strong potential catalyst for future Greek-Turkish reconciliation and stability. As Stephen Blank says, “if Europe successfully integrates Turkey into the EU then Turkey’s ability to throw its weight around with impunity will decrease. It will have to rely more on economics than on military force<sup>160</sup>” The prospect of eventual EU membership is probably the best incentive for Turkey to remain flexible in its dealings with Greece.

### **3. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

Greece and Turkey acceded to the Alliance in 1952. Their addition gave NATO increased manpower, yet it enlarged the area of responsibility to be defended and it inherited the traditional Greek-Turkish antagonism in the alliance.

Until 1974, the main - if not the only - rivalry noticeable between the two countries was linked to the amount and quality of the aid expected to receive through NATO to reinforce their respective armed forces or their defense infrastructures. However, the Turkish invasion of Cyprus had two major implications concerning NATO. The first one was Greece’s withdrawal from the military wing of the alliance, demonstrating in this way its disappointment at the passivity of NATO in the wake of the

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<sup>160</sup> See, Stephen Blank, “*Turkey’s Strategic Reorientation*,” Jane’s Intelligence Review, August 2000, p.22.

Turkish aggression.<sup>161</sup> Stern says “the failure of NATO’s secretary-general, Joseph Luns, on vacation in the Black Forest, to accede to the urgent demand of Athens for an emergency meeting of the North Atlantic Council was particularly galling to Greeks<sup>162</sup>.” The second one was its turbulent re-entry in the alliance under the 1980 Roger’s agreement; an agreement reached after several objections by Turkey concerning the new structure of the operational responsibilities in the Aegean (Turkey was opposed to a pre-1974 *status quo ante*). A reintegration never implemented in the years that followed, thus leaving room for different interpretations by the two members and creating a struggle between them on the issue of operational control limits.<sup>163</sup>

In the 80s, Greece and Turkey vetoed each other’s ‘country chapters’ at the Defense Review Committee and each country opposed infrastructural spending in the other. In addition, NATO’s position to exclude the island of Lemnos (due to its demilitarized status) thus concurring with the Turkish side resulted in a boycott by Greece of all exercises in the Aegean that did not include the island.

Analogous problems continued well into the 90s. At the end of 1994, NATO was attempting to finalize the establishment of the new subordinate HQs Allied Land Forces South-central Europe (LANDSOUTHCENT) in Larissa, responsible for the land defense

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<sup>161</sup> “Athens government had asked the alliance to intervene in Cyprus both politically and militarily in order to avert Turkish occupation of nearly two-fifths of the Republic of Cyprus. The alliance did next to nothing to stop the Turkish invasion.” Quoted from Ronald Meinardus, *Third-Party involvement in Greek-Turkish disputes*, ed. by Dimitri Constas, *The Greek-Turkish Conflict in the 1990’s*, St. Martin press, New York, 1991, p.158.

<sup>162</sup> Monteagle Stearns, *U.S Policy toward Greece, Turkey and Cyprus*, Council on Foreign Relations Press, New York 1992, p.68.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.70-71.

of Greece. Greece had reversed its 1993 blockage of the arrangement, but in 1994 Turkey refused its support until Greek and Turkish airspace over the Aegean Sea was firmly defined. Specifically, the Joint Staff of NATO had set its manning plan for the LANDSOUTHCENT headquarters in early 1994, but subsequent Turkish and Greek disagreements suspended funding well into 1995.

A solution to the problem was reached in December 1997 with the agreement by both countries over NATO's new command structure.<sup>164</sup> A structure that comprises for NATO's southern flank a Regional Command (RC) in Naples and one Joint Sub-Regional Command (JSRC) in each of the four Mediterranean member-states: Greece (Larissa), Italy (Verona), Spain (Madrid) and Turkey (Izmir). These sub headquarters, whose main weight rests on the land-based army, will also have necessary manning on the part of the navy and the air force. In contrast to the north JSRC's, the south regional sub headquarters will not have predetermined limits of operational responsibility.<sup>165</sup> For the conduct of exercises and operations, the commander of RC South will provide the operational control boundaries on a case-by-case situation based on the planned activities. The role of sub headquarters will be one of coordinating and implementing decisions taken by the Military Committee with the cooperation of each member-state. This flexible approach of vague national borders received both countries' consensus and presented a convenient solution for NATO. However, it does not address the issue and postpones resolution of the dispute.

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<sup>164</sup> See *NATO Review*, No.1, Spring 1998, pp.10-14.

<sup>165</sup> See for more information, Kyriakos Kentrotis, *Air-Naval Operations in Aegean: International Law and Geopolitics*, Proskino, Athens 1999, p.111.

Addressing a statement to the press at the end of the NATO Military Committee meetings Secretary General Solana said, "I would like to salute the agreement between Greece and Turkey which took place yesterday. It is a historic breakthrough overcoming differences that go back almost forty years. It will make NATO more effective in the Eastern Aegean, a region of key strategic significance for all Allies<sup>166</sup>."

In addition, soon after the 1996 Imia (Kardak) crisis, Mr. Javier Solana proposed confidence-building measures (CBMs) based on a May 1988 Memorandum of Understanding between the Greek and Turkish Foreign Ministers. In that memorandum - although never implemented - Greece and Turkey had agreed to:

- Respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each other and their rights to use the high seas and international airspace of the Aegean.
- Avoid interfering with shipping and air traffic while conducting military activities in the high seas and international airspace.
- Avoid conducting military exercises in the high seas and international airspace during the peak tourism period of July 1 - September 1 and main national and religious holidays.

Solana renewed his CBM effort in February 1997 with proposals, which were strongly supported by the United States. Among these proposals was the establishment of a center at NATO Command HQs in Naples to monitor Aegean airspace operations.

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<sup>166</sup> Quoted from Secretary General's statement to the press, December 2, 1997. [Available on line: [www.nato.int/docu/speech/1997/s971202b.htm](http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1997/s971202b.htm)].

Since then, the two sides have been sending pictures (Recognized Air Picture) of Aegean activity to NATO HQs.

Beyond this initial agreement, from 1997 until the end of Solana's term of office as NATO Secretary General, the relevant talks had not reached an end. Solana's announcement<sup>167</sup> in June 1998 that Greece and Turkey had agreed to full implementation of the 1988 Yilmaz-Papoulias Memorandum and that talks were continuing on this basis was rather premature. The implementation of such measures between Greece and Turkey has not succeeded because the two countries are unable to jointly define the problem, (i.e. the causes of the tension and the appropriate measures to prevent it).<sup>168</sup>

On October 31, 2000 the Foreign Ministers of Greece and Turkey while attending the General Assembly of the Atlantic Treaty Association in Budapest, made the following joint statement:

We have agreed to take up and implement a set of Confidence Building Measures with a view to promoting the climate of confidence between our two countries. In this connection, we have further agreed that some of those measures will be elaborated within the framework of NATO and the remaining measures will be taken up at the bilateral level. We have instructed

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<sup>167</sup> Statement by the Secretary General of NATO, Dr. Javier Solana, on CBMs between Greece and Turkey, Press Release (98)74. *Embassy of Greece News Review, Press and Information office*, June 1998, Vol.4, No.6.

<sup>168</sup> Turkey is proposing the opening of a dialogue, initially to identify and thereafter to resolve "bilateral problems" in the Aegean and at the same time the full implementation of a package of CBMs in the framework of the "good offices" of the NATO Secretary General (including all his proposals tabled since March 1997). These include for example two that provoked a sharp reaction from Greece, and which provided for flights by unarmed aircraft during training exercises and the use of IFF (a system for recognizing "friendly or foe" aircraft) by Turkish fighters on their entry into the Aegean (instead of the submission of a flight-plan). In contrast, Greece considers that the tension is the result of unilateral claims and provocation by Turkey in the Aegean. In that context, Greece wishes the Measures to reverse the policy of tensions and the revisionary policy of Ankara - to be Measures that consolidate security based on the international status quo. Turkey, in contrast, wishes the Measures to safeguard and strengthen a state of uncertainty - to be Measures to consolidate the "Gray zones" and the so-called "joint-sovereignty" of the Aegean. For an extensive analysis on the CBMs see, Katerina Hatzandoniou, *Building Confidence in Greek-Turkish Relations: Exploring the Possible*, Defensor Pacis, Issue 6, September 2000.

our respective officials to start the elaboration of the CBMs with a view to implementing them as early as possible. We are also informing the NATO Secretary General and requesting his collaboration for the joint work to be taken up within the NATO framework.<sup>169</sup>

During the cold war, their unwillingness to cooperate in security matters was a serious inconvenience to the alliance. Greece and Turkey constituted the southern flank of NATO, guarding the Soviet Union's access to the Mediterranean through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. NATO commanders based in Naples, who were responsible for defense of that flank, spent more time preventing conflict between Greece and Turkey than conflict with the Soviets. With the end of the Cold war and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the importance of Greece and Turkey to the alliance has actually increased.

The most hazardous and costly western military and diplomatic initiatives at the end of the previous century have been in the Balkans, supported by sea and air power operating in and above the waters of Greece and Turkey. Supply lines to Kosovo run through the Greek port of Thessaloniki. Greece and Turkey have both supplied military units to the peacekeeping forces in Kosovo and Bosnia. The ambitious programs of peacekeeping and reconstruction in the Balkans that NATO is involved in have only recently begun and Greek and Turkish participation is essential for their successful completion. In addition, policing Iraqi airspace continues from Turkish airbases and a new precarious situation in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is just unfolding with uncertain outcomes for the security and stability of the region.

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<sup>169</sup> Joint Statement by the Foreign Ministers of Greece and Turkey, *Ta Nea*, 1/11/2000.

Although it seems that in the past few years NATO is more actively involved in a settlement of its two members' rivalry, unresolved problems continue to haunt the alliance's southern flank. The success of NATO's exercise "Dynamic Mix" in May 2000 was not equally uneventful in October of the same year during exercise "Destined Glory." In "Dynamic Mix," Turkish planes and troops participated in the largest annual military exercise in the eastern Mediterranean from Greek soil for the first time after 28 years.<sup>170</sup>

During "Destined Glory," however, Greece ended abruptly its participation from Turkish soil when it pulled out its forces following the blocking of Hellenic Air Force aircraft by Turkish jets. The aircraft took off from a Greek airbase, flew over the island of Lemnos, and were heading for a bombing run in Turkey, when they were intercepted. Turkey warned of "undesired results" if Greece persisted in flying over two Aegean islands (Lemnos and Ikaria).<sup>171</sup> The problem highlighted how difficult it is to solve problems of military cooperation between Greece and Turkey and probably how misplaced the hopes of NATO and the United States are that the alliance's new military structure will resolve the differences.

#### **4. The Balkans**

The Balkans have traditionally been an important factor in Greek-Turkish interaction. Many of the Balkan initiatives undertaken by Greek Prime Ministers in the

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<sup>170</sup> See "Turkish Jets Land in Greece for First Time in 28 Years," Jane's Defense Weekly, May 31, 2000.

<sup>171</sup> See, "Greek Forces Leave Turkey over NATO Exercise Dispute," CNN, October 23, 2000, [available on line: [www.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/meast/10/23/turkey.greece.nato.ap](http://www.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/meast/10/23/turkey.greece.nato.ap)]. In addition, "Turkey Intercepts Greek NATO Planes," English edition of Kathimerini, 19/10/2000.

1970s and 1980s - especially towards Bulgaria - were designed to relieve the country's borders from tension and gain political support from Greece's Balkan neighbors in case of an attack from the east.<sup>172</sup>

Turkey's new activism<sup>173</sup> in the Balkans after 1989 created concerns among Greek politicians and analysts. This new activism was seen as part of a calculated effort by Ankara to create an "Islamic arc" on Greece's northern border in order to encircle and isolate Greece.<sup>174</sup> Turkey's quick recognition of FYROM in February 1992 reinforced Greek fears of a Turkish encirclement. Similar concerns were sparked by Turkey's rapprochement with Bulgaria in 1991-1993 and Ankara's increasing cooperation with Albania after 1991. However, it was Greece's isolation and unilateral embargo policy towards FYROM<sup>175</sup> and the deterioration of its relations with Albania<sup>176</sup> that had allowed the Turkish involvement. This competition and rivalry in the Balkans tended to

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<sup>172</sup> For a more detailed analysis see, Thanos Veremis, *Greek Security: Issues and politics*, Adelphi Papers No.179, IISS 1982, pp.6-9.

<sup>173</sup> On Turkey's activism in the Balkans, see J. F. Brown, *Turkey: Back to the Balkans*, edited by Graham E. Fuller and Ian Lesser, *Turkey's new geopolitics*, Westview Press, 1993. Also J. M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation*, London: Hurst & Co., 1995.

<sup>174</sup> See Yiannis Valinakis, *Greece's Security in the Post-cold War Era*, Ebenhausen, April 1994, p.48.

<sup>175</sup> The emergence of an independent state (FYROM) after the dissolution of Yugoslavia had revived Greek fears regarding Macedonian irredentism. These fears were reinforced by Skopje's use of the star of Vergina in its flag, the use of the name of Macedonia, and the incorporation of certain clauses in the country's constitution that could be interpreted as suggesting territorial claims on parts of Greek Macedonia. See Thanos Veremis, *Greece's Balkan Entanglement*, Eliamep, 1995, pp.67-93.

<sup>176</sup> The problems of the Greek minority in Albania, the sentencing of five ethnic Greek Albanians for allegedly attacking an Albanian army barracks in April 1994, and the status of thousands of illegal Albanian immigrants in Greece were some of the main issues that affected the two countries relations in the mid-90s.

complicate Greek-Turkish bilateral relations and made disputes over the Aegean and Cyprus more difficult to resolve.

At the end of 1994, Greek policy “began to shift away from the tough nationalistic stands of the previous years and to reflect a new pragmatism and sense of reality<sup>177</sup>.” The consequence of this policy change was an immense improvement in Greece’s relations with its northern neighbors over the coming years. Greece’s economic superiority,<sup>178</sup> combined with its status as the only Balkan state in the EU, resulted in an economic activity<sup>179</sup> and penetration of the above-mentioned states that surpassed the Turkish influence and considerably alleviated Greece’s security concerns. In addition, for geographic reasons Greece is more deeply involved in Balkan geopolitics than Turkey. The long Greek borders with Albania, the Former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia, and Bulgaria in comparison to Turkey’s tiny bordering at the southeastern end of the Balkan peninsula with one state - Bulgaria - presents inherent barriers to Turkish involvement. This factor is compounded also by the relative underdevelopment and recent problems of the Turkish economy, compared to the Greek one.

Thus, the Balkan factor has considerably diminished as a friction issue in the Greek-Turkish interaction mainly due to Greece’s substantial progress in overcoming its

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<sup>177</sup> Quoted from Stephen Larrabee, *Greek Security Concerns in the Balkans*, RAND/RP-780, 1999, p.323.

<sup>178</sup> Greek GDP is higher than the total of the GDP’s of all formerly Communist states in the Balkans put together including all former Yugoslav republics (excluding Romania). Source: CIA world factbook. [Available on line: [www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook)].

<sup>179</sup> Today Greece ranks first among all foreign investors in Bulgaria and FYROM and it is the later country’s second largest trading partner (Germany is first). With Albania has signed numerous agreements in different sectors and the currently estimated 500,000 Albanians to Greece (mostly illegal) export an estimated \$US680 million per year in wages in Albania. Source: Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign affairs. [Available on line: [www.mfa.gr/foreign/a3en.htm](http://www.mfa.gr/foreign/a3en.htm)].

previous diplomatic isolation and strengthening the ties with its Balkan neighbors. As long as Greece continues to modernize its economy and overcome its economic weaknesses, it will continue to play an important role in the Balkans.

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## V. CONCLUSIONS

Greek perception of a Turkish threat remain high and this perception is perhaps even more distinct in the wake of the cold war. In its aftermath, Turkey has emerged as a regional power due to its geopolitical position at the center of instability (Middle East-Caucasus-Balkans). There is a consensus between the public and Greek elites that Turkey's aim is to alter the territorial status quo governing the Aegean. This aggression has assumed a dual form. On the one hand, a persistent challenge of the continental shelf, territorial waters, airspace jurisdiction, and sovereignty over islands. On the other hand, a continuous call for renegotiations through bilateral agreements. These two aspects, together with the Cyprus problem have dominated the agenda of Greek-Turkish relations over the past twenty-seven years.

Greece's effort to seek strategic reassurance from the U.S. or NATO has not been fruitful.<sup>180</sup> NATO has been unable to reduce military tensions, and "elimination of the urgent need to defend against the Soviets has weakened NATO's deterrent influence on Greeks and Turks<sup>181</sup>." The EU presents a strong potential catalyst for Greek-Turkish reconciliation, however Turkey's inability to enter the union in the near future due to its economic problems also hinders this external factor. Finally, the U.S. constitutes the

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<sup>180</sup> Such an example is the December 1981, NATO Defense Ministers meeting. Greece tried during this meeting to secure a guarantee against Turkey's aggression. Since NATO members were not willing to agree, the whole meeting ended in failure. For the first time in NATO's thirty-two year history no joint communiqué was issued. See, Ronald Meinardus, *Third-Party Involvement in Greek-Turkish Disputes*, on the Greek-Turkish Conflict in the 1990's, edited by Dimitri Constas, St. Martin Press, New York 1991, p.159.

<sup>181</sup> James M. Wilkinson, *Tackling Greek-Turkish Hostility*, Report to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, Carnegie Corporation, June 1999, p.1.

strongest mediator, but important interests with both countries result in neutrality which fails to fulfill this need. Overall, the West is a major factor in the dynamics of Greek-Turkish strategic interaction that makes less likely an all out confrontation, but it cannot provide guarantees for the prevention of one.

Within this environment, Greece has been trying over the last two decades to develop those elements in its doctrine that will realize its security considerations and effectively counter any Turkish hostility. The first measures taken towards this direction after 1974 significantly improved its defense capabilities, resulting in a relative military balance in the region and a decline in Turkish claims. During the 1987 crisis, Greece declared that the imminent Turkish exploration of the Greek continental shelf would violate its national sovereignty and would constitute a *casus belli*. Possessing sufficient military balance, Greece had the ability to raise the stakes.<sup>182</sup> The quick mobilization and preparation for a pre-emptive strike demonstrated its determination to escalate the situation if necessary. In addition, the conditional offer that Greece would also refrain from drilling in “disputed” areas, gave the Turkish leadership “the ability to take the necessary step backwards without damaging its reputation or domestic position<sup>183</sup>.” Greece’s deterrence strategy worked in this case and Turkey abandoned its plan of pursuing explorations on the Greek continental shelf.

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<sup>182</sup> The Greek Prime Minister had said that “for the first time since 1974 Greek forces were prepared to go for war with Turkey.” Helen Laipson, *U.S Policy towards Greece and Turkey since 1974, on the Greek-Turkish conflict in the 1990’s*, edited by Dimitri Constas, St. Martin Press, New York, 1991.

<sup>183</sup> Quoted from Athanasios Platias, *Greek Strategic Doctrine: In Search of Autonomy and Deterrence*, Papazeses pub., 1992, p.41 (in Greek).

However, during the years that followed Turkey's major re-armament program created a significant gap in the two countries' military forces. In the 90s, Turkey's behavior became more forceful and its claims included questioning of territorial rights. Such examples are provided by the 1996 Imia (Kardak) case, the crisis over the S-300 missiles in Cyprus as well as massive airspace violations. Concerning the first two cases, Greece, lacking sufficient military balance and external support, tilted towards weakening of its deterrence credibility.

Deterrence is a policy "that seeks to persuade an adversary, through the threat of military retaliation, that the costs of using military force to resolve political conflict will outweigh the benefits<sup>184</sup>." It is a policy of skillful nonuse of military force. It is about credibility, declaration to react if challenged, and capability to launch a counter-blow. The first two depend highly on the third one. To maximize deterrence without matching the adversary's forces quantitatively requires deployment of superior technology, organization, tactics, and strategy. Defensive sufficiency aims toward this goal and the two major re-armament programs initiated in 1996 and 2001 include assets that will restore the relative balance by enhancing quality. After all unilateral reductions or unbalanced arms increases can lead to instability and a reduction in deterrence.<sup>185</sup>

Flexible response provides Greece with those options to handle future crisis in such a way that a black or white situation can be avoided, thus making de-escalation

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<sup>184</sup> Michael Howard, *Reassurance and Deterrence: Western Defense in the 1980s*, Foreign Affairs 61, 1983, p.315.

<sup>185</sup> See D. Brito and M. Intriligator, *Can Arms Races Lead to the Outbreak of War*, Journal of Conflict Resolution 28, 1984, pp.63-84.

more feasible. Finally, the Joint Defense Area concept aligns Greece and Cyprus military efforts against the common threat. Although serious attempts have been made for its development, it is probably the weakest link in the country's deterrence doctrine. However, it shows Greece's determination to support a just solution on the Cyprus issue. The Aegean and Cyprus disputes, although largely unrelated, in practical terms are psychologically linked. A resolution of the Cyprus problem would transform the overall climate of Greek-Turkish relations and will address more practical questions concerning air and sea space differences.

Rational deterrence theory cannot tell us how much a particular benefit or cost is worth to the adversary, its propensity to take risks, its level of uncertainty, or the consequences of a leadership change. Conflict situations like the one between Greece and Turkey are essentially bargaining situations. As Schelling says, "they are situations in which the ability of the participant to gain his ends is dependent to an important degree on the choices or decisions that the other participant will make<sup>186</sup>." Nevertheless, a preferred strategy for Greece in order to balance deterrence stability with credibility is a firm-but-flexible policy. It requires a mixed policy of standing firm in response to Turkish claims while offering compromise based on reciprocal accommodation.<sup>187</sup>

Concluding, Greek-Turkish relations have entered a period that the prospects for resolution are better now than they have been in years. A new rapprochement effort has unfolded between the two countries since the 1999 destructive earthquakes in Turkey,

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<sup>186</sup> Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1963, p.5.

<sup>187</sup> See for further analysis, Paul K. Huth, *Extended Deterrence and the Prevention of War*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1988, p.51.

and the two sides have made gestures of reconciliation. Unfortunately, experience has shown us that similar efforts in the past did not only lead anywhere but in certain cases were followed by major crisis. Greece's deterrence doctrine includes those elements needed to restore the balance in the Greek-Turkish interaction and tries to ensure that a low or medium level crisis will not get out of hand. Thus, from the military perspective of Greek-Turkish interaction provides an additional effort to convince Turkey that its costs will outweigh the benefits, thus increasing indirectly the prospects for cooperation and stability.

*In general men have fought during the past two hundred years neither because they are aggressive nor because they are acquisitive animals, but because they are reasoning ones: because they discern, or believe that they can discern, dangers before they become immediate, the possibility of threats before they are made.*

- Michael Howard, *In the Causes of War*

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